politics

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FRENCH POLITICAL WRITING

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Voice

In the days of calamity I heard a voice. I heard: "I shall reduce these men, I shall reduce them, even now they are shortened, though as yet they suspect nothing. I shall shrink them to such leastness that there will be no way of telling man from woman, and even now they are no longer what once they were, but because their organs can join they still consider themselves distinct, one this, the other that. But I shall afflict them to such a point that no organ will count. They shall be left only the skeleton, a mere trace of their skeleton to which to fasten their woe. No more gadding about! What do they need legs for? Petty their journeys, without scope. So much the better. Like a statue in the park which has only one gesture no matter what happens, they shall be frozen to stone; but smaller, much smaller."

I heard this voice and trembled, but not too much, for I admired its somber determination, its vast and apparently lunatic project. This voice was but one of a hundred voices, filling the length and breadth of the air from East to West, and all were aggressive, wicked, hateful, promising evil to come.

But man, now maddened, now cool and deliberate, equipped himself with reflexes and plans in case something really went wrong; he was prepared, though he seemed futile enough and had a hunted look.

He who trips on a pebble had already been walking for two hundred thousand years when I heard the voice of hate and threat that hoped to make him afraid.

HENRI MICHAUX

(Translated by Lionel Abel)

The French Condition

TO understand the France of today, we must look back to 1914. The situation cannot be explained solely in terms of defeat, occupation, and the exhaustion following a struggle conducted under particularly trying circumstances: devastation of the country by the "libertors" as well as the enemy, equivocal nature of the Resistance, squandering of human lives according to notions of "national greatness" and "mass action," i.e., the values of DeGaulle and of the Communists respectively. Rather, today there are coming to light all the losses of vitality, all the corruption, bankruptcy and socio-political decay which already existed in the 1918-1939 period and which were not remedied while there was perhaps yet time.

1. French Militarism

For many generations, the majority of Frenchmen were willing to pay the cost of that idea of national greatness (*"grandeur"*) which the Revolution and Napoleon had assimilated to the idea of patriotism. Proposals by bourgeois statesmen under Louis Philippe and after 1870 were definitely unpopular. So, too, the anti-militarism of Saint-Simon, Proudhon and the syndicalists was restricted to a rather small circle of intellectuals; in the revolutionary *avant-garde* itself the most generous professions of pacifism and internationalism were mixed with a leaning toward the Strong State (*"Republique une et indivisible"*) and a "peoples army" when "the fatherland is in danger"; Jaurès is a good example. From time to time, of course, the Augean stables of militarism had to be cleaned out lest they infect the Republic (Boulanger, the Dreyfus case). The French general staff maintained its "honor" in World War I even though technically it was not prepared, and the people produced millions of docile soldiers resigned to the most unbelievable sacrifices.

The only rational outcome of that war would have been a new organization of Europe which would have permitted a general disarming. As we know, the very opposite took place, and each nation fell into the absurdity of trying to find a security based on force without the possibility of ever gathering really effective force. Hence it was impossible after 1918 to do away with a French general staff, aureoled with victory, which was also indispensable for the occupation of the Rhine, of Syria, etc. But among the common people, without its ever crystallizing into a new consciousness of international fraternity, a vague feeling spread that "to begin all that again" would be simply suicidal; while among the upper classes the conviction that "war doesn't pay"—i.e., does not buttress the dominant position of the rich—was mixed with dreams of a Praetorian Guard to keep order internally. Colonial warfare came to a standstill: episodes like the campaign against Abd El Krim cannot be compared to the conquests of North Africa, Indochina and Madagascar between 1880 and 1910. The army rested on its laurels and limited itself to preparing to fight another 1914 war, correcting the mistakes made then.

In short, it was a completely decadent military system which Daladier brought into action in 1939, with the ineffable Gamelin at its head. After the debacle, DeGaulle,

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the obstinate visionary, wanted to bring it back to life, motorized. But the people did not respond; the Resistance militia—the F.F.I.—soon gave up trying to imitate *"les soldats de l'an II"*; the regular army was so strapped for volunteers that the "pacification" of Viet Nam and Morocco has had to be mostly conducted by a Foreign Legion recruited from German war prisoners, Russian deserters, Poles and Italians. The Communists know very well how unpopular and antiquated militarism has become in France. And so, although they are in principle the advocates of a strong "people's army," a big air force and the annexation of the left bank of the Rhine, they do not press these demands very hard. (Or perhaps, who knows, they are waiting until they occupy the War Ministry to uncover their batteries?) In any case, it seems improbable that militarism can be revived in France as a popular institution.

2. France As a Great Power

French economy has been stagnant a long time. And yet, although it began to slow down as early as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (which facilitated the British economic hegemony that was formalized at Utrecht in 1713), French commerce and industry managed to retain its place in the front ranks up to the end of the Second Empire. Nor should it be forgotten that, despite all the setbacks in its "economic progress," France was always a prosperous country, especially in the sense that a certain ease in living arrangements—dare I say, a certain *"douceur de vivre"?*—was more real and more widespread than in the Germany of Krupp and perhaps even than in the USA —not to mention Japan—despite the more powerful structure of those nations' economies. Even in the sinister 1938-9 period of the liquidation of the Popular Front by Daladier and the Cagoulards, might one not have said, in the words of the Swiss banker, Clavieu, who wrote his Amsterdam clients on the eve of the great 1789 bankruptcy: "The finances of this country present a mixture of debts and payments, an abundance of cash, a general activity, a goodness of soil, and a geographical situation, all of which combine to make up an incalculable force of resistance." Today, however, if recent economic articles in *Combat* are to be trusted, this fortunate combination of forces of resistance is exhausted, and a period of misery and decay is to be expected: inadequate forces to repair the ruins of war; financial and administrative disorder; decline in real wages; rise in parasitic classes; shortage of labor in industry and agriculture which only heavy immigration of foreign workers can remedy.

As for the roots of France's present political weakness, they may be traced back to 1918 when she was offered a lucky chance, by the collapse of the empires of the Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns and Romanovs, to regain her rank as the leading continental power. It is hardly necessary to rehash here the dismal story of how successive French governments—of the "Right" and "Left" alike—backed by public opinion, threw away this miraculous opportunity. It is strange to recall today how willing, even ardent, the Czechs, the Poles, the Rumanians and the Yugoslavs were to submit to French guidance, how easy it was to come to an understanding with pre-fascist Italy, how Germany itself would have been glad to see its weak democracy supported and advised by a generous republican neighbor, how much more readily the Soviet Union—in the time of Chicherin and Rakovsky—would have reached an understanding with Paris than with London. It was all ruined by ten years of confusion, of pettiness, of indifference by the French "public" to European questions, of squalid adventures (project to restore the Hapsburgs, support given to fascism) and of usurious calculations (reparations). By 1936 —after she had rejected the last chance offered her by the Ethiopian war and the Spanish civil war—France had been reduced to a bloated body, spineless, frightened, drifting in the tow of Chamberlain and Halifax, despised—and soon detested—by countries which fifteen years earlier would have been glad to be her satellites.

What is really discouraging is that in the year 1947 the popularly elected leaders who govern France and the journalistic choir which hymns their deeds for the benefit of the man in the street appear to have learned nothing and forgotten nothing about the ambitions and methods of Poincaré, Tardieu and Georges Bonnet. General De-Gaulle is ambitious to play the role of both Foch and Clemenceau, a role that was outmoded even in their day. The Ph.D. in History, M. Bidault, who goes to mass and is of good family, does indeed lack the vulgarity of the Ph.D. in History, M. Daladier, but his political "style" is the same: delay, suspicion, shopkeeper's haggling. And if the pastrycook, Duclos, or the "man of the people," Thorez, were to get power, one could hope for no improvement, not because—as the chauvinists of *Le Populaire* reiterate—they are "agents of a foreign power," but because Stalin's imperialistic policies are disastrous for all peoples, including the Russians.

From now on, Warsaw, Prague, and Belgrade are closed even to the "goodwill tours" of the uninspired Ivon Delbos. Poor Nenni's outstretched hand of friendship seems likely to remain in mid-air, while in Italy the brief period of Francophilia has already soured to resentment. Neither the Anglo-Americans nor the Russians, confident in their own power, use any ceremony when they want to manipulate France (or one part of France strong enough to neutralize the other). And yet the very idea of a European problem, of international solidarity based on something more solid than rhetoric appears to be totally absent from the mental horizon of the men who govern France. A few journalissts now and then speak in such terms, knowing very well they are voices in the wilderness. And His Majesty, the Proletariat? Majestically, he says the hell with it.

3. The Sun of French Culture

Culturally, France has maintained a position of leadership more or less continuously from Descartes to Proust, Gide and Halévy, and now to the Paris School in painting and such writers as Malraux. Ignorant though I am of London and New York as centers of culture, I venture to state that Paris has not been dethroned, that intellectuals like Camus and Sartre can measure up to any rivals on the international scene, and that France still has an incomparable elite of talented writers and a flourishing "literary life" of taste, vitality, and large human spirit.

This cultural position is based on (1) certain general features of world civilization, and (2) certain French cultural and social institutions. That both—or either—will survive can no longer be taken for granted.

(1) Doubtless the absolute number of persons in the world today who speak French is greater than it has ever been. But relative to other tongues, the world-domain of French has shrunk. In Diderot's time, French culture was practically coterminous with Western culture, and its votaries throughout Europe were very nearly the total

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group of "cultivated persons." Today languages more widely spoken than French have become the instruments of a popular education that is thought to be on as high a level—and more "up-to-date"—than that formerly drawn from French writings. No French book can possibly achieve the huge printings common in Russia and America, the two nations which have chiefly developed that kind of mass or popular culture which spreads farther throughout the world every day. France herself is already half swamped: Hollywood films are shown widely, and it appears that translations of American and British novels are read in greater numbers than the works of French authors. It is not likely that French intellectuals and artists can harmonize their work with this sort of "popular culture"—or rather, substitute for culture—nor that the products of French culture, saturated as they are with individualism and humanism, can successfully compete with it.

So far, I have spoken only of literature. But literature is far from constituting the total of those cultural values whose diffusion has illuminated the name of France. Intellectual tendencies are closely connected with trends in all sorts of other fields, from the sublime to the frivolous. The diffusion of French thought is accompanied by the diffusion of all kinds of useful and pleasurable objects, of hairdressing styles and jewels, of military titles, of rules of etiquette, of recipes and table manners. In the age of tanks, cocktails, pullover sweaters, bars, week-ends, etc., the lead in social customs and the whole *décor* of living has more and more come from outside France. Perhaps Russian fashions will now have their turn, and *Humanité* will soon be telling us that the samovar is the genial invention of Stalin's grandfather, who was punished by the cruel Czarist government for daring, like a modern Prometheus, to bring the people hot water for collective consumption.

(2) The peculiar qualities of the high French culture, both works of art and intellectual productions, are closely linked to two features of French social organization: the educational system, and a tradition of sociability.

France has long had a remarkable system of schools and colleges: the Sorbonne, the Academy, the Jesuit colleges, the strict and thorough secondary schools, and the great Napoleonic foundations: *Ecole Polytechnique, Ecole Normale,* and the various *Ecoles des Beaux Arts* which, reactionary as they have often been, have always taught the highest standards of craftsmanship. For over a century this system, whose chief emphasis has been laid on serious study and on developing the ability to express one's own ideas with ease and clarity, has been the nursery of an intellectual elite which it has at the same time thoroughly tested and sifted (*"le jeune francais—bête à concours"*).* The Third Republic added a compulsory primary-school system to which, outside the official bureaucratic plans and often in direct opposition to them, the republican enthusiasm of a whole class of humble intellectuals imbued with the idea of being the avant garde of the advancing people was able to give a spirit of large humanitarianism and liberating anticlericalism which contrasted sharply with the work of the famous "Prussian schoolmaster, architect of Sadowa, Sedan . . . " and Hitler.

The other great tap-root of French culture is a *sociability* that is probably unequalled since the symposia, the agoras and the porticos of the Greek city states. This has made conversation a necessity of everyday life—a conversation that observes a code of politeness whose first article is the complete equality of the talkers, and that pursues only one end: clear expression and understanding. A novel by Louis Betrand notes that in a small city of eastern France in 1870 there might still be observed all the social usages of the thousands of salons that had grown up in imitation of the court at Versailles. The proliferation is uninterrupted from the salon of the Marquise de Rambuillet to those "cafes litteraires" which André Billy has recently written about with such nostalgia.

How much is left today of the backbone of the Napoleonic *Université* and of these real organs of French sociability? The papers are full of complaints about the educational crisis: professors and teachers are driven by hunger to look for a less miserable existence in journalism, administrative posts, or even business. The Vichy regime upset the normal-school system, where teachers are prepared, and as a result it may be that the whole spirit of primary instruction has been altered. Furthermore, the ascendance of the Communist Party has substituted dogmatic conformism and the cult of the State in those teaching circles whose attitude used to be libertarian; while the clerical reactionaries who were favored by Vichy have used the power of the MRP to hold the positions they won at that time. Whether it is a question of the intellectual level of candidates for a B.A., or of the living conditions of college fellows, or of the superficial and botched-up reorganization of the *Ecole des Sciences Politiques* (the traditional fortress of reaction), or of the abandoning of the study of Greek (and Latin, too, before long, it seems likely), or of hospital internes and laboratory assistants who are now faced with actual hunger unless they have independent incomes—wherever one looks, the sad state of French education is evident. It has become almost impossible for the younger generation to acquire the kind of intellectual training which their elders received at the beginning of their careers. Another factor is the corruption that hangs heavy in the contemporary atmosphere and that attracts

* "French youth—examination fodder."

FURIOSO

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youth to the black market or other forms of easy-money parasitism. Above all, there is the widespread tendency to prefer technological training to the "folderol" of the humanities. This reduction of knowledge to a utilitarian instrument is one more instance of the triumph of mass culture.

As for sociability, I can make no final judgment, since we still live "in temporary quarters," after the earthquake which uprooted so many lives and conditioned so many people to look with bitter suspicion on their neighbors and to lose all scruples about getting the better of them. One can imagine the pleasures and the tastes of the only class that today is prosperous: those enriched by speculation, collaboration and black market deals, which persist despite the thunderbolts of M. Ives Farge's cartoons.

Civilizations do indeed die, as Paul Valéry writes; but he might have added that they take their time about it. After all, students were writing impeccable Attic Greek under the last Byzantine emperors; and if it is hard to remember that the Anglo-Danish buffoon who now rules Greece is the legitimate successor of Theseus (a Theseus who has brought back with him the Minotaur and given it his people for a pasture), when we hear Venizelos or Politis debate, we sense the heritage of Odysseus, the man of many counsels. And so it would be premature to assume that Paris and French culture are in permanent decline—although I must say that Malraux's prophecies, in his pathetic UNESCO address, seemed excessively subjective.

4. French Empire to "Union Francaise"

During his term as premier, Leon Blum made many speeches. The reader of the thick volume containing them will find not a sentence, not an allusion to the 50 or 60 million colonial subjects of the Third Republic, nothing on the bloody repressions in North Africa in 1937-8, nothing on the Indochinese atrocities and the scandalous famine of 1931-2, nothing on the wretchedness and slavery André Gide found in French Equatorial Africa. For it was Blum who once said: "I am a Frenchman first, a socialist afterwards." And it was the *Front National* government which sent the "tough" General Nogues to Morocco, which refused amnesty to the Indochinese political prisoners confined in the hell of Poulo Condor, and which approved the mass executions in Morocco and Tunisia.

All this suggests the abyss between democratic France and that overseas Empire which is now supposed to feel united to the "mother country" by common memories and shared glories. In reality, throughout most of the Third Republic, colonial expansion had three purposes: (1) to keep far away from Paris those militarists who were, by reason of their politics or their ambition, most dangerous to the existence of the republic (such as the monarchist, Lyautey); (2) to make profits for a plutocracy which got its start under Gambetta and which went in for the kind of shady deals Tardieu's African companies and the Bank of Indochina practiced on a large scale; (3) to soothe those nationalistic feelings of the middle and petty bourgeoisie which had been ulcerated by the 1870 defeat. The nation as a whole began to profit from the colonies only with World War I, when several hundred thousand African natives were slaughtered on the Western Front as a sacrifice to the tribal gods of Law and Civilization. After 1919, the colonial contribution to French prosperity became considerable: the Indochinese rubber boom, the huge profits from Moroccan plantations, the West African cocoa industry—all these made their contribution to the French budget and even, as in England in the 19th century, made possible a modest rise in workingclass living standards.

But we should not forget that, alongside the France which has developed the bourgeois spirit to its farthest imaginable reaches of egotism, greed, spite, treachery, and antisocial meanness, there exists also another France—one of uncompromising intelligence, of a sociability filled with uncalculating *gentilesse* and a kind of romantic boldness, eager for adventures not in a "superman" spirit but rather in the temper shown by Joinville's companions when they said during the battle in the desert "that this will be something interesting to tell our ladies about"; the France which cannot bear to have a single person suffer injustice, be it the protestant Calas or the Jew Dreyfus, the France which —in the past, anyway—went to the barricades at the cry, "Vive la Pologne!" (This dualism—sometimes observable in the same individual—is the real tragedy of French "social mythology.") It was only the French who fraternized with the North American redskins, and it was in France that the cry rang out, apropos the abolition of slavery: *"Périssent les colonies plûtot qu'un principe!"* Thus in the simplest way, without either Quaker doctrines or philanthropic texts, French intellectuals (and no doubt many others who are not known to us) looked on natives as human beings and needed no *raison d'Etat* to protest against their oppression and urge them to defend themselves.

It is true that, in our times, the intellectuals and the sincere democrats of France have made no headway, or very little, in getting the government to treat the colonial peoples with justice and generosity.* And yet the "idées claires" in which the French idiom is so rich—especially the political idiom—have frequently set into motion quite unexpected forces. The very formula, "Union Francaise," written into official texts has already provoked a fermentation which can be bottled up neither by the disavowals of politicians nor the brutalities of that Carmelite admiral recently sent to Indochina to defend the opium and alcohol monopoly. They can massacre the Annamites, they can play on the fear or corruption of the notables of Cochin-China, but they cannot wipe away the fact that they treated as equals with the government of Viet-Nam (which seems to be headed by a most remarkable man). The Algerian government appears to have successfully falsified the elections in many districts, but the voice of the Arab and Berber separatists has already been heard and will be heard in the Palais Bourbon. Grotesque as may be the concession of a single deputy for a district of one million square miles, and however "backward" may be the natives of West and Equatorial Africa, they realize that something new is in the air, that forced labor is officially abolished and that one can even, with circumspection, oppose the Whites who only yesterday were still so all-mighty. All this

* This inability of "thinking France," despite its great influence on public opinion, to insinuate its ideas into the actual functioning of the State machinery is a point worth reflecting about. It was strikingly manifested in the Constituent Assembly of 1789-91, all of whose good intentions were so easily nullified in action—as, for instance, the paper system of local self-government which the Jacobins suppressed in practice. Another example was the 1944 "liberation": new men animated by generous visions apparently came to the top—and yet the machinery of the State, more weighty and fantastic than ever, is once more lumbering along, brushing aside like straws the most solemn promises of a New Order. And it is the Men of the Resistance themselves, the very ones who then appeared so ardent for change, who today drive, pull, or push the sinister mechanism along.

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will no doubt develop in confusion and fantastic suffering, but it does seem that a real social and political emancipation is now in progress. In any event, the French colonial empire has lived out its sordid life.

5. 1789 and 1947

I cannot forget the sorrowful words of that Spanish Republican colonel who saw his comrades shut up by Daladier in the Gurs prison camp: "The France that we loved and respected has been dead since 1870."

Let us attempt to distinguish between the misconceptions and the true insights comprised in that experience of disillusionment that occurs so often—and not only in our time—when some friend of the France of the Encyclopedists and of the Revolution comes up against quite another France, one of the most pettifogging "ésprit bourgeois," of insufferable chauvinist vanity, of bureaucratic cretinism and the dessicated inhumanity of an obtuse "common sense." What connection, indeed, can be established between such national traits and the generous principles of 1789-92?

To begin with, it is interesting to note that these principles, although formulated in a more rigorously logical system than that of British liberalism or American democracy, have yet, in their diffusion throughout the world, had a much stronger emotional appeal. When the native elites of "backward" nations admire the British constitution, when some Latin American or Philippine government proposes to imitate the American system, it is a matter of doctrinaire pronouncements and of mimicry of external rules of political conduct. But for those who in the 19th century considered France their "second fatherland"—and for contemporary revolutionaries in Madagascar and Viet Nam—adherence to the principles of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity as understood in 1789, 1830, 1848, and 1870 is transmuted into an enthusiasm which embraces a whole *Weltanschauung,* a revolution in each individual's most intimate being and in his own personal fate.

I believe I am correct in saying that the majority of Americans accept more wholeheartedly and completely the principles of their 1776-1785 revolution than is the case with the majority of Frenchmen with *their* revolutionary principles of 1789. For to accept (and, indeed, to insist on) the principles of the American Revolution means to reach the heights of respectable conformity, ultimately arriving at the stratospheric respectability of the Daughters of the American Revolution. While until very recently in France, and still more so in countries dominated by France, any appeal to the principles of 1789 inevitably took on the rebellious color of a call to battle against the status quo in order to "complete the work begun by the Revolution." When the appeal was serious, that is. When it was exploited in official speeches, the popular suspicion was that it was all a demagogic trick. The principles of 1776 have been satisfactorily (to 99 out of 100 Americans, at least) embodied in stable institutions which may be criticised or amended only in minor details. But the principles embodied in the French constitution of 1791, although in content much the same as those set forth in the American Declaration of Independence, have always been interpreted by those who passionately believed in them as the very promise of Utopia; and the institutions which were supposed to embody them have been ephemeral not only because the forces of reaction have been persistent and strong in France, but even more because in the eyes of their partisans those principles have been merely preliminary sketches whose true realization lay in the future. To sum up: the principles of the American Revolution crystallized a society simple in structure and homogeneous in its moral and social code; but the Rights of Man subverted a feudal, Catholic, hierarchical and repressive social order while at the same time it called into existence a kind of popular and equalitarian "sociability" with which I can find nothing to compare in the modern world.* It is, therefore, not surprising that the "tradition of 1789" should be a complicated and contradictory affair.

EUROPEAN

(Translated by Dwight Macdonald)

Eye for Eye

by Simone de Beauvoir

"OUR butchers have taught us very bad habits," Gracchus Babeuf wrote sadly. We too under the oppression, in the midst of traitors and accomplices, saw poisonous feelings come to light in us, feelings we never expected to savor. Before the war, we lived without wishing ill to any of our fellows; the language of vengeance and expiation had no meaning for us. We despised our political and ideological opponents; we did not detest them; and the so-called enemies of society, murderers and thieves, were not regarded as enemies by us. From our point of view, their crimes were merely accidents brought on by a social order that did not give all men equal opportunity; they compromised none of the values to which we were attached. We could not have brought ourselves to report a theft to the police, for we did not think that we had a right to any of our possessions. A murder could inspire us with horror but not with resentment—we would never have had the gall to ask that our lives be respected by men whom poverty and the accident of birth excluded from the human community. Conscious of our own privileges, we did not allow ourselves to judge these people, and we certainly had no wish to identify

* To say nothing of the complexity of the purely ideological elements which went into the making of "the principles of 1789," as contrasted with the relative harmony of the various Anglo-Saxon ideologies. It was apparently not too difficult to find a workable compromise between the rationalism of Locke and the individualistic (and often libertarian) ideas of the Puritans, the Wesleyans and the other non-conformist sects. But consider, on the other hand, such antinomies as Rabelais-Calvin, Montaigne-Saint François de Sales, Descartes-Pascal, Voltaire-Rousseau—antinomies which have carried to the point of paroxysm the consciousness of an irreductible disharmony in the "French point of view" about the basic problems of human destiny and social justice.

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ourselves with courts of law that were bent on defending an order of which we disapproved.

In June, 1940, we began to learn anger and hate. We have desired the humiliation and death of our enemies. Today we identify ourselves with the verdict every time a court condemns a war criminal or an informer or a collaborationist. Since we wanted this victory, since we asked for these sanctions, it is in our name that the judging and punishing are done. We are public opinion that expresses itself through the newspapers, through placards and public meetings; new legal forms have been improvised to satisfy us. We congratulated ourselves on Mussolini's death, on the hanging of the Kharkov butchers, on Darnand's tears; by doing so, we shared in the judgment that was passed on them. Their crimes had reached into the inmost part of us; it was our values, our very reasons for living, that were affirmed by their punishment.

It goes without saying that our attitude toward "regular" criminals has not changed. As far as we are concerned, the same excuses still hold good for them, since, on this level, the social order has not become more just. But insofar as it is a rejection of tyrannies, insofar as it tries to reestablish man in his dignity, this society is ours. We feel our solidarity with it; we are accessory to its decisions.

It is no small matter to find ourselves suddenly in the position of judges and even of executioners. During the years of occupation, we claimed this role with enthusiasm; hate was easy then. Reading the articles in "Je Suis Partout," listening to the voices of Ferdonnet or Hérold Paquis on the radio, thinking of the incendiaries of Oradour, of the torturers of Buchenwald, of the Nazi leaders and the German people, their accomplice, we said to ourselves with real passion, "They will pay." And our anger seemed to us the promise of a joy so weighty that we could hardly imagine bearing it. Now they have paid; they will pay; they are paying every day. And joy has not risen in our hearts.

No doubt it is circumstances partly that have cheated us: the cleansing has not been thorough; many of the great war criminals went down in a catastrophe so brutal that it had no expiatory semblance; others remain at large; the attitude of the German people puts our hatred out of countenance. But all this is not enough to explain why a revenge so sharply desired should have left a swampy taste in our mouths. It is the idea of punishment itself that is responsible. Not that we are experiencing in their concrete truth the feelings and attitudes designated by the words, vengeance, justice, pardon, charity, the words have taken on a new meaning that astonishes and disturbs us. A sanction (in the legal sense) no longer appears to us as a simple police measure reflecting, to some degree, the mystical beliefs of earlier periods. Now we have all felt, to a greater or lesser extent, the need to punish, the need to revenge ourselves, and we should like to understand better what this means to a man of our day: is there a basis for it, and can it be satisfied? In trying to answer this, we must look about us and then look back into ourselves.

IT will appear to us, first of all, as an evident fact that at the moment of punishment the relation of the two parties concerned is not a relation of conflict. During a conflict, the enemy is perceived as pure exteriority; he is simply a resistance to be overcome, a piece of human equipment. His extermination is not desired for its own sake, but as necessary means to the final success. What is called "taking reprisals" is still a warlike act. To be sure, murder and destruction do not have, in this case, an immediate efficacy—you shoot hostages, who are already completely powerless; you annihilate civilian populations, whose death does not advance the war's end—but such measures have an indirect usefulness. They intimidate the enemy. The treatment inflicted on the victims is not directed at them; it is a method of pressure. In all cases where executions have an exemplary character or flow from an established policy, it is out of place to speak of punishment. What characterizes punishment is that it is aimed expressly at the individual who suffers it. The idea is not to prevent him from committing new crimes, for if he is legally within reach of punishment, he is already in no position to do harm. It is not a question, either, of making him an example: it would be ridiculous to suppose that Mussolini was shot in order to intimidate future dictators. Revenge, then, does not justify itself by realistic considerations. On the contrary, concern for expediency often makes us renounce punishment; in Italy's case, or even in Germany's, it would be an absurd policy to seek to pay off grudges instead of trying to rebuild a stable and permanent Europe—revenge, in this connection, would be a luxury-activity. Revenge, in fact, answers to something so deep in us that it can hold practical interests in check. The government would have given rise to serious scandal if it had decided to make use of certain men who were capable of doing the state service but who were too much compromised by acts of collaboration. For man does not live by bread alone. He has spiritual appetites too, which are not less essential than the others. And the thirst for vengeance is of this kind; it answers to one of man's metaphysical demands.

But it would be a mistake to look for this profound meaning in the elaborate forms society has encased vengeance in. To understand it, we must grasp it in its spontaneity. During the revolutionary period we went through just after the liberation, acts of vengeance, individual and collective, but in any case not codified, had full play of expression. There were the shaved heads, the lynchings of the people who had been shooting from the roof tops, the summary execution of certain National Guardsmen, the massacres of the S. S. jailors by the liberated prisoners. In all these cases, punishment set itself no end that was foreign to itself. The object was to reach, by means of death, by means of suffering, individuals who were looked on as personally or jointly responsible for certain bad acts; the only justification for the treatment they got was the hatred they had excited—and this seemed sufficient. Hatred, in fact, is not an arbitrary passion; it decries a scandalous reality and demands that it be effaced from the world. We do not hate hail or pestilence; we only hate people, and not as material causes of a material havoc, but as conscious authors of a true evil. A soldier who kills in combat is not hateful, because he is obeying orders and because there is a reciprocity of situation between his enemy and himself; neither death, nor suffering, nor captivity is in itself a scandal. There is no scandal until

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the moment that a man treats his fellows as objects, when, by torture, humiliation, slavery, and murder, he denies them their human existence. Hatred is a seizure of somebody else's freedom insofar as that freedom was being used to realize that absolute evil that is the degradation of a man into a thing. It summons vengeance to its aid at once, and vengeance strives to destroy the evil at its source by laying hold of the guilty person's freedom.

"He will pay for it"—the word is telling; to pay is to furnish an equivalent for what one has received or taken. The desire for equivalence is expressed more exactly in the famous *lex talionis* or law of retaliation: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Doubtless, this law retains, even at present, a magical after-taste; it tends to satisfy some unknown, somber god of symmetry; but first and foremost it corresponds to a profound human requirement. Once I heard a member of the *maquis* telling how he had applied the talion to a National Guard who had been guilty of torturing a woman. "He understood," he concluded, soberly. This word, which is frequently used in this violent and elliptical sense, is a declaration of the principle of vengeance, a statement of its profound intention. No abstract conception is involved here, but exactly what Heidegger is talking about when he speaks of "understanding"—an operation by which our whole being realizes a situation; you understand a tool by using it; you understand a torture by experiencing it. The butcher feels, in his turn, what the victim felt, but this in itself cannot remedy the original evil. It is not enough for the suffering to be relived or revived; the totality of the situation must be revived also. The butcher, who saw himself as sovereign consciousness and pure freedom confronting a wretched tortured thing, is now a wretched tortured thing himself, experiencing the tragic ambiguity of his human condition. What he has to understand is that the victim, whose abjection he now shares, shared something else with him too—the very privileges he thought he could arrogate to himself. And he does not understand this intellectually, in a speculative manner. He realizes concretely the turnabout of situation; really and concretely, he reestablishes the state of reciprocity between human consciousnesses, the negation of which is the most fundamental injustice. An object for others, every man is a subject to himself, and he lays the sharpest claim to being recognized as such. Everybody knows, for example, how many fights in crowded places start with a bump or an accidental kick: the person that gets jostled inadvertently is not simply a body, and he proves it—he defies the other person with a word, a look; finally he hits him. The respect he is exacting for himself each of us claims for his near ones and finally for all men. The affirmation of reciprocity in inter-human relations is the metaphysical basis for the idea of justice. This is what revenge is striving to reestablish against the tyranny of a freedom that wanted to make itself supreme.

BUT this enterprise comes up against a material difficulty. What is involved is nothing less than the *coercion of freedom*—the terms are contradictory. Yet there can be no true revenge except at this price. If the butcher should decide, without external pressure, to repent his error, and even were to go so far, in the zeal of remorse, as to apply the talion to himself, he might possibly disarm revenge, but he would not gratify it, because he would remain master of his regrets and his destiny; he would remain pure freedom, and in the very sufferings that he might inflict on himself voluntarily he would still, in spite of himself, be making mock of his victim. What is required is that he should feel *himself* as victim, *he* should undergo violence. But violence, by itself, is not enough either; its only point is to give rise in the guilty person to an acknowledgment of his true condition; the very nature of freedom, however, makes the success of this dubious. Violence can be an inducement, a temptation, but never an absolute compulsion. What we really want is to cast a spell on the enemy's freedom, to seduce it like a woman: the alien consciousness must remain free with regard to the content of its acts; it must freely acknowledge its past faults, repent, and despair; but an external necessity has to force it to this spontaneous movement. It must be led from without to extract from itself feelings nobody could impose upon it without its own consent. This contradiction is the reason that revenge's aims can never be satisfied. If the pain inflicted is excessive, the criminal's consciousness is simply engulfed in it; utterly absorbed in suffering, he is nothing but a piece of quivering flesh—torture has overshot its mark. If, on the other hand, he is spared physical pain, his consciousness, being once more at his own disposal, regains its autonomy: you can make up your mind to moral punishment; in captivity and exile you can even find a kind of happiness; you can also endure it with irony, mutiny, or arrogance, or with resignation unmixed with remorse. Here again punishment ends in defeat. This explains why, throughout history, we see really vindictive men displaying all the resources of their imagination thinking up punishments for their enemies. I cannot remember what Italian despot it was that invented "The Great Lent," a device that involved forty days of slow torture, culminating in the gradual suppression of all food and drink—the alternation of horrible sufferings and long, hopeless respites is one of the best recipes for subduing a man's spirit. Yet even "The Great Lent" ended in death, and the criminal's death is the avenger's disappointment. Dying, he slips out of the world and escapes from punishment. You can beat his body, dirty it with spit, hang it up by the feet, and prove thus that the proud tyrant was a thing of flesh too. But the really desirable outcome would have been to have this truth recognized by the tyrant himself. Hitler's death defrauded us; we would have liked to have him living to get a clear idea of his own ruin, to "understand." The ideal revenge is the one Louis XI took on La Balue, the one Judex takes on the wicked banker whom he locks up for life in a cell; there you have the consciousness present and prisoner of the situation you impose on it; you congeal it in despair. Even so, you cannot be sure that it will not end by escaping into madness. In any case, today you can hardly ever find circumstances favorable to the accomplishment of such perfect revenges, outside of the detective story. Lacking the power to dispose of the hated enemy indefinitely, you have to decide to kill him; the avenger must still reckon here with the temporal dispersion that limits his hold on somebody else's consciousness. The

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moment when Mussolini cried, "No, no," to his squad of executioners gratified hatred, far more than the next one when he fell under bullet-fire—but how could that moment be perpetuated? Mussolini living would devote himself to giving it the lie. There are moments when revenge can come near its mark—Paul Chack and Darnand sobbing "I didn't understand"—but it has no way of keeping a conscience in subjection for a lifetime. It therefore makes up its mind to suppress it, hoping that the abjection of the last few instants will be eternalized by death. This, however, is an argument from despair, since the concrete restoration of reciprocity between butcher and victim would require the living presence of the butcher, become victim in his turn.

And is this reciprocal relation ever really reestablished, even during those instants when the guilty person's conscience yields to the solicitations of physical or moral penalties? The preferred case is the one where the victim takes his own revenge. When, at the time of the liberation, the internees of the concentration-camps massacred their S. S. jailors, the tables were turned in the most concrete and obvious manner: victims and executioners had here really changed places. But when it is a question of revenging someone else, of revenging the death, when one party refuses to realize the meaning of the punishment and the other is absent, where will the revenge get its meaning? A stranger can intervene only insofar as he participates in that universal human essence that has been injured in the victim. He locates the punishment, then, on the plane of the universal; he makes it the exercise of a right. But he is not qualified to defend the universal rights of man. If he insisted on doing this, he would set himself up as a sovereign conscience, and become a tyrant in his turn. This is the reason that private vengeance always has something disquieting about it. The more concrete the hatred it is based on, the purer it is. Nobody, I think, was revolted by the attitude of the deportees who massacred their torturers. But private vengeance becomes suspect as soon as the avenger claims to set himself up as a judge. Revenge is an inter-individual and concrete relationship, like strife, love, torture, murder, or friendship; it must show itself in its true colors and not look for universal justifications. If we are shocked by the Ku Klux Klan and the Vigilantes, it is not so much by their cruelty as by the serene arrogance with which they dispose of crime and punishment. And even in cases where the revenge has the most authentic character, how can anybody be sure that the avenger is not letting himself be carried away by the will-to-power that is dormant in every man? Hatred can be merely a pretext; you try to wipe out a scandal and make a new one appear in the world. One revenge calls for another, evil engenders evil, and injustices pile up without destroying each other.

THIS is why society does not authorize private vengeance. It only admits of it under exceptional heads and without ever officially legalizing it. The liberation was hardly over before a statute was passed strictly prohibiting individual violence. It delegated the job of punishment to special bodies created for the purpose. The idea of vengeance has been replaced by the idea of sanctions, which has been elevated into an institution and cut away from its passional roots. We must punish without hatred, they say, in the name of universal principles. If revenge ends inevitably in defeat, will social justice be more fortunate?

Here there is no attempt to reestablish an impossible reciprocity. All that has been given up. Physical torture, which is tolerated as a police measure, is out of order with sanctions: prison, penal servitude, degradation from office, national disqualification, all have the same character—they tend to eliminate the guilty party from society. The judges turn their backs on a past they know is out of their reach; the dead, indeed, are no more being avenged than they are being resurrected from their graves; the judges are aiming at the future. They want to restore a human community that conforms to its own imagined idea of itself, to uphold the values denied by crime; speaking here and now, for the future, in the name of society as a whole, they repudiate a wrong that cannot be wiped out. But such a repudiation cannot be a simple verbal manifestation; nothing could be more derisory than the impotent protests of the democracies, before 1939, against crimes that were all too real; this repudiation must prove itself in deeds. Society solemnly casts out of its bosom the man who bore responsibility for the wrongs it disavows, and when these have been particularly weighty, only one penalty is heavy enough to counterbalance them —death. Death does not appear here as an exaction of the law of the talion, which organized justice does not recognize —and besides neither Brassilach, Petain nor Laval directly killed anybody—it is, rather, the sole event capable of expressing the violence with which certain things are rejected. The whole paraphernalia of the trial is designed to endow the sentence with the greatest possible expressive power. And if the trial is not to be simply a verbal comedy, naturally the execution must follow it; but it is the verdict that counts, more than the execution; it is the will to kill the guilty party that matters, even more than his death. To such an extent that, during the Petain trial, it seemed plausible to affirm this will on one plane and yet amputate it of practical consequences, to condemn Petain to death with the avowed intention of sparing his life.

This extreme case shows how far the idea of legal sanction has got from the idea of vengeance. In vengeance, the man and the criminal are blended in the concrete reality of a unique freedom. By being able to discern in Petain both a traitor and an old man, condemning the one, pardoning the other, the High Court merely demonstrated, up to the hilt, one of the tendencies of social justice: it does not view the guilty man in the totality of his being; it does not engage in a metaphysical struggle with a free conscience that a body of flesh and bone imprisons; it condemns him insofar as he is a substract and a reflection of certain bad acts. The punishment, therefore, takes the form of a symbolic display, and the condemned man comes close to being seen as an expiatory victim, for, after all, it is a man who is going to feel in his consciousness and his flesh a penalty intended for that social and abstract reality—the guilty party. The farther the accused is separated in time from his crimes, the more striking the dissociation: he appears to be not the same man who committed them.

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The thing that made hate so clear and easy during the occupation was that it was directed at a freedom actually engaged in evil; in his moment of triumph, an unjust conqueror can be joyfully punished. From this point of view, the attempt on Henriot was as satisfying as possible; the more engaged the guilty person is in his criminal universe, the more legitimate punishment seems. But official trials involve such long delays that the accused is sometimes even physically unrecognizable: we did not expect to see Laval with that tired, old man's face. A friend of mine, whom one would suspect of leniency toward Vichy or of idle sensibility, told me that he had felt a kind of emotion when he heard Laval, during the Petain trial, ask the journalists in a certain sort of voice, "Is it all right to sit down? Would a glass of water be possible?" The conquered adversary was merely a poor, pitiful man; it became difficult to desire his death. Time, besides, is not the only factor that alters the features of the accused; the change in the situation shows him in a new light. And this too always happens, making it radically impossible to satisfy hatred, which would like to seize the guilty person in the midst of his evil activities; yet if someone had struck Henriot down during one of his speeches, taking him unawares, the blow would have been abortive since he would not have been conscious of punishment. In his room, facing his murderers, coolly making them welcome, he was already less hateful. The pomp of the great trials, the sense they give of being tragic manifestations, their ceremonious rites, emphasize the change in position in a troubling and embarrassing way. I know how struck I was on entering the great hall where the Brassilach trial was proceeding. Inside there was an audience composed of curiosity seekers; there were journalists who had come for professional reasons, magistrates practicing their magisterial trade and trying in vain to lift themselves into true grandeur—all of them people, like myself, engaged in living out another ordinary moment of their daily lives. Then there were the jurors with their impenetrable faces looking like pure incarnations of abstract justice. And in his box, alone, cut off from everybody else, was a man whom the circumstances were stimulating to show the very best that was in him. There he was face to face with his death, and consequently with his life too, whose whole burden he had to assume, now that he was about to die. Whatever that life had been, whatever the reasons for his death, the dignity with which he bore himself in this extreme situation enforced our respect. We wanted the death of the editor of *Je Suis Partout,* not the death of this man who was completely absorbed in dying well. In other cases, when, on the contrary, the accused behaved like a coward (Paul Chack, for example), when he forswore himself, like Darnand, his tears produced disgust that had the effect, also, of making us lose our desire for vengeance. During their day of arrogance, we would have rejoiced if anybody had predicted their fall to us. We believed in that arrogance then, and it pleased us to think of it as secretly fragile; but now that it has shown its fragility, it seems to us merely a wretched mask behind which a weak spirit was hiding its defects; a weakness so avowed leaves us no appetite for victory over it. Here again we are aiming confusedly at the impossible: we would like force to acknowledge itself as weakness without destroying itself as force. It happens occasionally that the desired synthesis is almost realized: when the horror of the crimes being punished is so great that it even swamps the present reality of the trial. This was true at Kharkov and at Lunebourg. The presence of the victims' families, the vibrant stories of the witnesses, the showing of atrocity films, made the past so near and so real that the torturers could not escape it; they themselves admitted, by their hysterical fits and attempts at suicide, that they recognized themselves in the hateful figures their victims conjured up. But such cases are rare. Ordinarily, whether we come to respect or despise him, the man that gets condemned is not the man we hate.

Very well, punish without hate, they tell us. But I believe that this is precisely the mistake of official justice. Death is a real and concrete event, not the accomplishment of a rite. The more the trial takes on the aspect of a ceremonial, the more scandalous it seems that it can end in real shedding of blood. This was another thing that struck me during the Brassilach trial: the lawyers, the judges, everybody, even the public, was playing a part; examinations and counsel's speeches unrolled with the fanfare of a comedy-drama; only the accused belonged to this world of flesh in which bullets kill. Between these two universes, no thoroughfare seemed conceivable. Society, in renouncing vengeance, surrenders the possibility of linking crime and punishment concretely together. Punishment then appears as a tribute arbitrarily imposed; for the guilty man, it is nothing but a horrible accident. True enough, vengeance degenerates almost fatally into tyranny, but in their concern with purity legal sanctions miss the concrete end they ought to have in view; they are only empty forms, while actually a fullness of content alone could justify them.

THUS it appears that all punishment is self-defeating. Can the principle itself be at fault? Perhaps this justice we are proclaiming is simply a snare and a delusion. Might it not be proper to let these grudges die and fling open the doors to charity? Let us listen then attentively to what charity has to say.

Vengeance is based on hatred directed at freedom that is generating evil. But is man ever really free in evil? Are not the scourges he let loose on earth of the same order as hail or pestilence? The question would have no importance if we were looking at his actions on their objective side as we do during a conflict. It becomes essential here since their subjectivity is what we are after. And if we take the point of view of inwardness, do not these actions immediately cease to appear scandalous? There is a mirage of outwardness. Seen from the outside, the wicked seem wicked and the good absolutely good, as on Epinal images, but the truth is that, from the inside, man *is* never anything; he eludes all definition by a profound inconsistency. There is so much misery at bottom in all men, they are so totally consumed by nothingness, that quite often, when we get near an adversary who seemed to us from a distance hard and solid as a rock, we perceive that there is *nobody* really there for us to detest; nobody really willed those scandalous actions; they were not deliberate; they resulted

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from caprice or thoughtlessness, chance, or mistake. And even if they were willed, they were not, insofar as they embodied an evil. "Nobody is bad voluntarily," said Socrates. The person who committed those deeds was seeking a certain good, at the very least his own good; perhaps he was egotistical, limited, trifling; but if we look honestly into the depths of our own natures, which of us will dare to say, I am better than that man there? It takes a lot of pride and very little imagination to pass judgments on other people. How is one to measure the temptations that a man is capable of undergoing? Or estimate the weight of circumstances that give an action its true form? One would have to take into account the man's education, his complexes, his defeats, the totality of his involvement in the world—then his conduct would certainly be explicable; even Hitler can be explained, by someone who knew him well enough. But to explain something is to understand it; it is already a kind of sufferance. Once they are seen as flowing from a given situation and a given temperament, the crimes themselves lose the arrogance, the self-willed presumption, that made them hateful. The objective look they first wore vanishes; they may have seemed that way to us, but that is not how they existed for their author, and he is certainly sincere when he refuses to recognize them, saying, "That isn't what I wanted. I didn't understand." During the Lunebourg trial, several of the Belsen butchers tried to commit suicide after seeing a reconstruction of their crimes projected; no doubt, they were overwhelmed by the censure of a public which was made up of their own countrymen, and felt unbearably, horribly alone; but I imagine, too, that this censure illuminated their crimes to themselves, showing them in a light that revealed an unfamiliar and horrible side of them, which the butchers had never thought of; they had only looked at them from their own point of view and had not put themselves in the victim's or in society's place. Now let us not forget that it is the intention behind the act that hatred and vengeance are aiming at, and even legal sanctions measure the violence of their repudiation of an act by the extent to which it was willed by a free agent. Besides, even granting that a man is responsible for his error, still the error will not express him altogether: here is a traitor who was a good husband, a good father, a loyal friend; he used his influence to save people—can the whole man be condemned for a single moment of his life? This would be even crueller, if the weakness he is blamed for is already part of the past, no longer the expression of a freedom but a dead, inalterable thing that the guilty man drags along behind him against his will. Since he is a different person from the one who committed the crime, can we really hate him? And what is the use of punishing him? In making this plea for the defense, Christian charity will be more urgent than any other kind, for it finds in the original fall an excuse for all sins: at the heart of all men is the same corruption; only grace can permit us to rise above it, but it is no earthly judge's place to know what help God has sent to one of His children; God alone can measure the temptation and the fault, and besides there is no fault except in relation to Him; He alone has the right to punish. As for men, they are all brothers in sin and wretchedness; crime ought not to appear to them as a scandal on earth, for the whole earth is a scandal in respect to God, Who has chosen, nevertheless, to save it by the Redemption; men must forgive each other as God forgives them.

THAT there is a great deal of truth in this point of view, nobody who is not carried away by blind hatred can dream of denying. Men frequently act without knowing what they are doing; it can even be said that they never know exactly. It was impossible to hate the sixteen-year-old Hitler Youths, in whom Nazism declared itself with savage violence, but who had the possibility of criticizing it. We reeducate children, ignorant people, badly informed populations; we do not punish them. We would as soon punish a sick person or a crazy man whose conscience had been annihilated. And each of us knows that even a normal adult always acts from situations he has not chosen; he is weighed down by various physiological and social factors which are outside his control. Further, we do not judge the act without the man; the one has no meaning or reality without the other; the act explodes in the interior of a life and a universe, and its real form can only be found there—this is why character-witnesses are heard during a trial and why an act can be made to seem less grave by showing it in the light of other acts which have nothing in common with it. If a crime appears as a pure aberration in a life that has been a long contradiction of criminal principles, we look on it with indulgence; it seems to have escaped from the guilty person rather than to have been willed by him. Finally, it is true that a freedom, though always connected with the past, is never halted or fixed by it. The guilty man can, by a new act, win back the good opinion of his fellows and rehabilitate himself in their eyes; thus, they can always freely decide to overlook a man's past errors and choose in favor of his future; they show their confidence in him and give him a chance to redeem himself.

But there are cases where no redemption seems possible, because the evil encountered is an absolute evil; and when this happens, we find the point of view of charity no longer acceptable, for we think that absolute evil exists. You can excuse every misdemeanor and every crime, even, by which an individual asserts himself against society; but when a man deliberately sets about to debase man into thing, he lets loose a scandal on earth which nothing can make amends for. This is the only sin against man there is, but once it has been brought to pass, no indulgence is allowable, and it is man's business to punish it. A Christian has the right to elect for charity, since he believes in the existence of a supreme judge; but charity, in its extreme form, is ruled out for people who profess a human morality and human values. Certainly man is wretched, dispersed, bogged down in the Given; but he is also a free being. He can resist the strongest temptations, and it is not true that time divides him from himself, for it is incumbent on each person to realize his own unity by incorporating his past in the design he makes for his future. If man's life is going to make sense, he must be held responsible for evil as well as for good, and evil, by definition, is what is rejected in the name of good, with no possibility of compromise. It is for these reasons that I myself have not

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signed the petition for commutation of Robert Brassilach's sentence. I think that during the course of the trial I understood, at least crudely, how his political attitude fitted into the ensemble of his life, and I know that when I left the Hall of Assizes, I did not wish for his death. Throughout that long and sinister ceremony he showed himself as deserving of respect, and not hatred; in the end, I could not face without anguish the thought that an affirmation of principle, "Traitors must be punished," would make blood flow some grey morning. Still, I did not sign. In the first place to "understand" is not to excuse, and all one ever understands is the situation in which freedom makes its decision. The decision itself, however, could have been different from what it was. Grasping a life in its coherence, its relations with the world as given, the logic of its development, does not prevent one from seeing that life as a choice. I saw very clearly at the trial that the accused himself had formed those opinions, those tastes, that sensibility, in whose name people claimed to excuse him, and of which, on the other hand, his faults represented a perversion. In the next place, I was touched by Brassilach's attitude in courageously taking his life on himself, but precisely by doing this, he admitted his solidarity with his past; when he demanded that we think of him as a free agent, he was demanding punishment also. And the unity that he achieved, over the months and the years, was, it seemed to me, something each of us should want. To deny the old angers and desires in favor of the emotion of the moment is to break human existence into worthless fragments, to annihilate the past and entomb the dead at the bottom of a pit of absence, to break all our ties with them. The hypocritical pomp of the trial sank an abyss between principles and reality, but if ideas, after all, do not have a concrete existence, if concrete facts mean nothing, then a man's death too is a thing deprived of meaning, and therefore of importance. If, on the other hand, the values we believe in are real and weighty, it is not shocking to affirm them at the price of a life.

But a question then arises: who is to do the punishing? We have seen that, contrary to the sociologists' assertions, the more justice becomes socialized and gives up its repressive character, the more too it loses meaning and its concrete hold on the world. The official courts claim to take refuge behind the objectivity that is the worst part of the Kantian heritage. They want to be simply the expression of an impersonal equity and to deliver verdicts that are simply the subsumption of a particular case under a universal law; but the accused exists in his singularity and his concrete presence refuses to be so easily disguised as an abstract symbol. The real event which is death and punishment in general is justified only if it is one of the stages of a wholly real conflict; the punishment must be tied concretely to the fault, and this connection cannot be established except through subjectivity. Only vengeance based on hatred achieves a real reversal of the rejected situation; it is the only thing that gets its teeth into the world. Yet you cannot admit the principle of a prompt and passionate justice administered by individuals, for the freedom of the avenger is in danger of becoming tyranny. Is the right person being punished? Was there a real wrong? It is easy to make a mistake and one that is perhaps irreparable: in the heat of the liberation, more than one innocent person was shot. The accused's trial must be subject to investigation, and the sentence that falls on him must not be dictated by caprice but must express a real determination; here again we find ourselves facing an alternative from which it is practically impossible to escape—popular vengeance reflects the passions of the moment instead of being a considered act of will, while the professional judges do nothing but obey instructions; there is no concrete will in them.

Thus, approaching the question of punishment via the judges, we arrive at the same impasse we met in considering the accused: every attempt to counterbalance the absolute event which is a crime manifests the ambiguity of the condition of man, who is simultaneously freedom and thing, unity and dispersion, isolated by subjectivity and yet coexistent with other men in the world's bosom—hence all punishment is one part defeat. But love and action too—quite as much as hatred and revenge—always involve a defeat, and that does not stop us from loving and acting, for we have not only to ascertain our condition; from the heart of its ambiguity we must choose it. We know enough today to give up the idea that vengeance will serenely regain for us a reasonable and just social order. And yet we must still insist on the punishment of genuine criminals. For punishment constitutes an acknowledgment of man as free in evil as well as in good; it distinguishes good from evil by the use that man makes of his freedom. To punish is to desire the good.

(*Translated by Mary McCarthy*)

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Neither Victims Nor Executioners

by Albert Camus

1. The Century of Fear

THE 17th century was the century of mathematics, the 18th that of the physical sciences, and the 19th that of biology. Our 20th century is the century of fear. I will be told that fear is not a science. But science must be somewhat involved since its latest theoretical advances have brought it to the point of negating itself while its perfected technology threatens the globe itself with destruction. Moreover, although fear itself cannot be considered a science, it is certainly a technique.

The most striking feature of the world we live in is that most of its inhabitants—with the exception of pietists of various kinds—are cut off from the future. Life has no validity unless it can project itself toward the future, can ripen and progress. Living against a wall is a dog's life. True—and the men of my generation, those who are going into the factories and the colleges, have lived and are living more and more like dogs.

This is not the first time, of course, that men have confronted a future materially closed to them. But hitherto they have been able to transcend the dilemma by words, by protests, by appealing to other values which lent them hope. Today no one speaks any more (except those who repeat themselves) because history seems to be in the grip of blind and deaf forces which will heed neither cries of warning, nor advice, nor entreaties. The years we have just gone through have killed something in us. And that something is simply the old confidence man had in himself, which led him to believe that he could always elicit human reactions from another man if he spoke to him in the language of a common humanity. We have seen men lie, degrade, kill, deport, torture—and each time it was not possible to persuade them not to do these things because they were sure of themselves and because one cannot appeal to an abstraction, i.e., the representative of an ideology.

Mankind's long dialogue has just come to an end. And naturally a man with whom one cannot reason is a man to be feared. The result is that—besides those who have not spoken out because they thought it useless—a vast conspiracy of silence has spread all about us, a conspiracy accepted by those who are frightened and who rationalize their fears in order to hide them from themselves, a conspiracy fostered by those whose interest it is to do so. "You shouldn't talk about the Russian culture purge—it helps reaction." "Don't mention the Anglo-American support of Franco—it encourages communism." Fear is certainly a technique.

What with the general fear of a war now being prepared by all nations and the specific fear of murderous ideologies, who can deny that we live in a state of terror? We live in terror because persuasion is no longer possible; because man has been wholly submerged in History; because he can no longer tap that part of his nature, as real as the historical part, which he recaptures in contemplating the beauty of nature and of human faces; because we live in a world of abstractions, of bureaus and machines, of absolute ideas and of crude messianism. We suffocate among people who think they are absolutely right, whether in their machines or in their ideas. And for all who can live only in an atmosphere of human dialogue and sociability, this silence is the end of the world.

To emerge from this terror, we must be able to reflect and to act accordingly. But an atmosphere of terror hardly encourages reflection. I believe, however, that instead of simply blaming everything on this fear, we should consider it as one of the basic factors in the situation, and try to do something about it. No task is more important. For it involves the fate of a considerable number of Europeans who, fed up with the lies and violence, deceived in their dearest hopes and repelled by the idea of killing their fellowmen in order to convince them, likewise repudiate the idea of themselves being convinced that way. And yet such is the alternative that at present confronts so many of us in Europe who are not of any party—or ill at ease in the party we have chosen—who doubt socialism has been realized in Russia or liberalism in America, who grant to each side the right to affirm its truth but refuse it the right to impose it by murder, individual or collective. Among the powerful of today, these are the men without a kingdom. Their viewpoint will not be recognized (and I say "recognized," not "triumph"), nor will they recover their kingdom until they come to know precisely what they want and proclaim it directly and boldly enough to make their words a stimulus to action. And if an atmosphere of fear does not encourage accurate thinking, then they must first of all come to terms with fear.

To come to terms, one must understand what fear means: what it implies and what it rejects. It implies and rejects the same fact: a world where murder is legitimate, and where human life is considered trifling. This is the great political question of our times, and before dealing with other issues, one must take a position on it. Before anything can be done, two questions must be put: "Do you or do you not, directly or indirectly, want to be killed or assaulted? Do you or do you not, directly or indirectly, want to kill or assault?" All who say No to both these questions are automatically committed to a series of consequences which must modify their way of posing the problem. My aim here is to clarify two or three of these consequences.

2. Saving Our Skins

I ONCE said that, after the experiences of the last two years, I could no longer hold to any truth which might oblige me, directly or indirectly, to demand a man's life. Certain friends whom I respected retorted that I was living

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in Utopia, that there was no political truth which could not one day reduce us to such an extremity, and that we must therefore either run the risk of this extremity or else simply put up with the world as it is.

They argued the point most forcefully. But I think they were able to put such force into it only because they were unable to really *imagine* other people's death. It is a freak of the times. We make love by telephone, we work not on matter but on machines, and we kill and are killed by proxy. We gain in cleanliness, but lose in understanding.

But the argument has another, indirect meaning: it poses the question of Utopia. People like myself want not a world in which murder no longer exists (we are not so crazy as that!) but rather one in which murder is not legitimate. Here indeed we are Utopian—and contradictory. For we do live, it is true, in a world where murder is legitimate, and we ought to change it if we do not like it. But it appears that we cannot change it without risking murder. Murder thus throws us back on murder, and we will continue to live in terror whether we accept the fact with resignation or wish to abolish it by means which merely replace one terror with another.

It seems to me every one should think this over. For what strikes me, in the midst of polemics, threats and outbursts of violence, is the fundamental good will of every one. From Right to Left, every one, with the exception of a few swindlers, believes that his particular truth is the one to make men happy. And yet the combination of all these good intentions has produced the present infernal world, where men are killed, threatened and deported, where war is prepared, where one cannot speak freely without being insulted or betrayed. Thus if people like ourselves live in a state of contradiction, we are not the only ones, and those who accuse us of Utopianism are possibly themselves also living in a Utopia, a different one but perhaps a more costly one in the end.

Let us, then, admit that our refusal to legitimize murder forces us to reconsider our whole idea of Utopia. This much seems clear: Utopia is whatever is in contradiction with reality. From this standpoint, it would be completely Utopian to wish that men should no longer kill each other. That would be absolute Utopia. But a much sounder Utopia is that which insists that murder be no longer legitimized. Indeed, the Marxian and the capitalist ideologies, both based on the idea of progress, both certain that the application of their principles must inevitably bring about a harmonious society, are Utopian to a much greater degree. Furthermore, they are both at the moment costing us dearly.

We may therefore conclude, practically, that in the next few years the struggle will be not between the forces of Utopia and the forces of reality, but between different Utopias which are attempting to be born into reality. It will be simply a matter of choosing the least costly among them. I am convinced that we can no longer reasonably hope to save everything, but that we can at least propose to save our skins, so that *a* future, if not *the* future, remains a possibility.

Thus (1) to refuse to sanction murder is no more Utopian than the "realistic" ideologies of our day, and (2) the whole point is whether these latter are more or less costly. It may, therefore, be useful to try to define, in Utopian terms, the conditions which are needed to bring about the pacification of men and nations. This line of thought, assuming it is carried on without fear and without pretensions, may help to create the preconditions for clear thinking and a provisional agreement between men who want to be neither victims nor executioners. In what follows, the attempt will be not to work out a complete position, but simply to correct some current misconceptions and to pose the question of Utopia as accurately as possible. The attempt, in short, will be to define the conditions for a political position that is modest—i.e. free of messianism and disencumbered of nostalgia for an earthly paradise.

3. The Self-Deception of the Socialists

IF we agree that we have lived for ten years in a state of terror and still so live, and that this terror is our chief source of anxiety, then we must see what we can oppose to this terror. Which brings up the question of socialism. For terror is legitimized only if we assent to the principle: "the end justifies the means." And this principle in turn may be accepted only if the effectiveness of an action is posed as an absolute end, as in nihilistic ideologies (anything goes, success is the only thing worth talking about), or in those philosophies which make History an absolute end (Hegel, followed by Marx: the end being a classless society, everything is good that leads to it).

Such is the problem confronting French Socialists, for example. They are bothered by scruples. Violence and oppression, of which they had hitherto only a theoretical idea, they have now seen at first hand. And they have had to ask themselves whether, as their philosophy requires, they would consent to use that violence themselves, even as a temporary expedient and for a quite different end. The author of a recent preface to Saint-Just, speaking of men of an earlier age who had similar scruples, wrote contemptuously: "They recoiled in the face of horrors." True enough. And so they deserved to be despised by strong, superior spirits who could live among horrors without flinching. But all the same, they gave a voice to the agonized appeal of commonplace spirits like ourselves, the millions who constitute the raw material of History and who must some day be taken into account, despite all contempt.

A more important task, I think, is to try to understand the state of contradiction and confusion in which our Socialists now exist. We have not thought enough about the moral crisis of French Socialism, as expressed, for example in a recent party congress. It is clear that our Socialists, under the influence of Leon Blum and even more under the pressure of events, have preoccupied themselves much more with moral questions (the end does not justify all means) than in the past. Quite properly, they wanted to base themselves on principles which rise superior to murder. It is also clear that these same Socialists want to preserve Marxian doctrine, some because they think one cannot be revolutionary without being Marxist, others, by fidelity to party tradition, which tells them that one cannot be socialist without being Marxist. The chief task of the last party congress was to reconcile the desire for a

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morality superior to murder with the determination to remain faithful to Marxism. But one cannot reconcile what is irreconcilable.

For if it is clear that Marxism is true and there is logic in History, then political realism is legitimate. It is equally clear that if the moral values extolled by the Socialist Party are legitimate, then Marxism is absolutely false since it claims to be absolutely true. From this point of view, the famous "going beyond" Marxism in an idealistic and humanitarian direction is a joke and an idle dream. It is impossible to "go beyond" Marx, for he himself carried his thought to its extreme logical consequences. The Communists have a solid logical basis for using the lies and the violence which the Socialists reject, and the basis is that very dialectic which the Socialist want to preserve. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Socialist congress ended by simply putting forward simultaneously two contradictory positions—a conclusion whose sterility appears in the results of the recent elections.

This way, confusion will never end. A choice was necessary, and the Socialists would not or could not choose.

I have chosen this example not to score off the Socialists but to illustrate the paradoxes among which we live. To score off the Socialists, one would have to be superior to them. This is not yet the case. On the contrary, I think this contradiction is common to all those of whom I speak, those who want a society which we can both enjoy and respect; those who want men to be both free and just, but who hesitate between a freedom in which they know justice is finally betrayed and a justice in which they see freedom suppressed from the first. Those who know What Is To Be Done or What Is To Be Thought make fun of this intolerable anguish. But I think it would be better, instead of jeering at it, to try to understand and clarify this anguish, see what it means, interpret its quasi-total rejection of a world which provokes it, and trace out the feeble hope that suffuses it.

A hope that is grounded precisely in this contradiction, since it forces—or will force—the Socialists to make a choice. They will either admit that the end justifies the means, in which case murder can be legitimized; or else, they will reject Marxism as an absolute philosophy, confining themselves to its critical aspect, which is often valuable. If they choose the first, their moral crisis will be ended, and their position will be unambiguous. If the second, they will exemplify the way our period marks the end of ideologies, that is, of absolute Utopias which destroy themselves, in History, by the price they ultimately exact. It will then be necessary to choose a most modest and less costly Utopia. At least it is in these terms that the refusal to legitimize murder forces us to pose the problem.

Yes, that is the question we must put, and no one, I thing, will venture to answer it lightly.

4. Parody of Revolution

SINCE August, 1944, everybody talks about revolution, and quite sincerely too. But sincerity is not in itself a virtue: some kinds are so confused that they are worse than lies. Not the language of the heart but merely that of clear thinking is what we need today. Ideally, a revolution is a change in political and economic institutions in order to introduce more freedom and justice; practically, it is a complex of historical events, often undesirable ones, which brings about this happy transformation.

Can one say that we use this word today in its classical sense? When people nowadays hear the word, "revolution," they think of a change in property relations (generally collectivisation) which may be brought about either by majority legislation or by a minority coup.

This concept obviously lacks meaning in present historical circumstances. For one thing, the violent seizure of power is a romantic idea which the perfection of armaments has made illusory. Since the repressive apparatus of a modern State commands tanks and airplanes, tanks and airplanes are needed to counter it. 1789 and 1917 are still historic dates, but they are no longer historic examples.

And even assuming this conquest of power were possible, by violence or by law, it would be effective only if France (or Italy or Czechoslovakia) could be put into parentheses and isolated from the rest of the world. For, in the actual historical situation of 1946, a change in our own property system would involve, to give only one example, such consequences to our American credits that our economy would be threatened with ruin. A rightwing coup would be no more successful, because of Russia with her millions of French Communist voters and her position as the dominant continental power. The truth is—excuse me for stating openly what every one knows and no one says—the truth is that we French are not free to make a revolution. Or at least that we can be no longer revolutionary all by ourselves, since there no longer exists any policy, conservative or socialist, which can operate exclusively within a national framework.

Thus we can only speak of world revolution. The revolution will be made on a world scale or it will not be made at all. But what meaning does this expression still retain? There was a time when it was thought that international reform would be brought about by the conjunction or the synchronization of a number of national revolutions—a kind of totting-up of miracles. But today one can conceive only the extension of a revolution that has already succeeded. This is something Stalin has very well understood, and it is the kindest explanation of his policies (the other being to refuse Russia the right to speak in the name of revolution).

This viewpoint boils down to conceiving of Europe and the West as a single nation in which a powerful and well-armed minority is struggling to take power. But if the conservative forces—in this case, the USA—are equally well armed, clearly the idea of revolution is replaced by that of ideological warfare. More precisely, world revolution today involves a very great danger of war. Every future revolution will be a foreign revolution. It will begin with a military occupation—or, what comes to the same thing, the blackmail threat of one. And it will become significant only when the occupying power has conquered the rest of the world.

Inside national boundaries, revolutions have already been costly enough—a cost that has been accepted because of the progress they are assumed to bring. Today, the costs

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of a world war must be weighed against the progress that may be hoped for from either Russia or America gaining world power. And I think it of first importance that such a balance be struck, and that for once we use a little imagination about what this globe, where already thirty million fresh corpses lie, will be like after a cataclysm which will cost us ten times as many.

Note that this is a truly objective approach, taking account only of reality without bringing in ideological or sentimental considerations. It should give pause to those who talk lightly of revolution. The *present-day* content of this word must be accepted or rejected as a whole. If it be accepted, then one must recognize a conscious responsibility for the coming war. If rejected, then one must either come out for the status quo—which is a mood of absolute Utopia insofar as it assumes the "freezing" of history—or else give a new content to the word "revolution," which means assenting to what might be called relative Utopia. Those who want to change the world must, it seems to me, now choose between the charnel-house threatened by the impossible dream of history suddenly struck motionless, and the acceptance of a relative Utopia which gives some leeway to action and to mankind. Relative Utopia is the only realistic choice; it is our last frail hope of saving our skins.

5. International Democracy and Dictatorship

WE know today that there are no more islands, that frontiers are just lines on a map. We know that in a steadily accelerating world, where the Atlantic is crossed in less than a day and Moscow speaks to Washington in a few minutes, we are forced into fraternity—or complicity. The forties have taught us that an injury done a student in Prague strikes down simultaneously a worker in Clichy, that blood shed on the banks of a Central European river brings a Texas farmer to spill his own blood in the Ardennes, which he sees for the first time. There is no suffering, no torture anywhere in the world which does not affect our everyday lives.

Many Americans would like to go on living closed off in their own society, which they find good. Many Russians perhaps would like to carry on their Statist experiment holding aloof from the capitalist world. They cannot do so, nor will they ever again be able to do so. Likewise, no economic problem, however minor it appears, can be solved outside the comity of nations. Europe's bread is in Buenos Aires, Siberian machine-tools are made in Detroit. Today, tragedy is collective.

We know, then, without shadow of a doubt, that the new order we seek cannot be merely national, or even continental; certainly not occidental nor oriental. It must be universal. No longer can we hope for anything from partial solutions or concessions. We are living in a state of compromise, i.e., anguish today and murder tomorrow. And all the while the pace of history and the world is accelerating. The 21 deaf men, the war criminals of tomorrow, who today negotiate the peace carry on their monotonous conversations placidly seated in an express-train which bears them toward the abyss at a thousand miles an hour.

What are the methods by which this world unity may be achieved, this international revolution realized in which the resources of men, of raw materials, of commercial markets and cultural riches may be better distributed? I see only two, and these two between them define our ultimate alternative.

The world can be united from above, by a single State more powerful than the others. The USSR or the USA could do it. I have nothing to say to the claim that they could rule and remodel the world in the image of their own society. As a Frenchman, and still more as a Mediterranean, I find the idea repellent. But I do not insist on this sentimental argument. My only objection is, as stated in the last article, that this unification could not be accomplished without war—or at least without serious risk of war. I will even grant what I do not believe: that it would not be an atomic war. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the coming war will leave humanity so mutilated and impoverished that the very idea of law and order will become anachronistic. Marx could justify, as he did, the war of 1870 for it was a provincial war fought with Chassepot rifles. In the Marxian perspective, a hundred thousand corpses are nothing if they are the price of the happiness of hundreds of millions of men. But the sure death of millions of men for the hypothetical happiness of the survivors seems too high a price to pay. The dizzy rate at which weapons have evolved, a historical fact ignored by Marx, forces us to raise anew the whole question of means and ends. And in this instance, the means can leave us little doubt about the end. Whatever the desired end, however lofty and necessary, whether happiness or justice or liberty—the means employed to attain it represent so enormous a risk and are so disproportionate to the slender hopes of success, that, in all sober objectivity, we must refuse to run this risk.

This leaves us only the alternative method of achieving a world order: the mutual agreement of all parties. This agreement has a name: international democracy. Of course every one talks about the U.N. But what is international democracy? It is a democracy which is international. (The truism will perhaps be excused, since the most self-evident truths are also the ones most frequently distorted.) International—or national—democracy is a form of society in which law has authority over those governed, law being the expression of the common will as expressed in a legislative body. An international legal code is indeed now being prepared. But this code is made and broken by governments, that is by the executive power. We are thus faced with a regime of international dictatorship. The only way of extricating ourselves is to create a world parliament through elections in which all peoples will participate, which will enact legislation which will exercise authority over national governments. Since we do not have such a parliament, all we can do now is to resist international dictatorship; to resist on a world scale; and to resist by means which are not in contradiction with the end we seek.

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6. The World Speeds Up

AS every one knows, political thought today lags more and more behind events. Thus the French fought the 1914 war with 1870 methods, and the 1939 war with 1918 methods. Antiquated thinking is not, however, a French specialty. We need only recall that the future of the world is being shaped by liberal-capitalist principles developed in the 18th century and by "scientific socialist" principles developed in the 19th. Systems of thought which, in the former case, date from the early years of modern industrialism, and, in the latter, from the age of Darwinism and of Renanian optimism, now propose to master the age of the atomic bomb, of sudden mutations, and of nihilism.

It is true that consciousness is always lagging behind reality: History rushes onward while thought reflects. But this inevitable backwardness becomes more pronounced the faster History speeds up. The world has changed more in the past fifty years than it did in the previous two hundred years. Thus we see nations quarreling over frontiers when every one knows that today frontiers are mere abstractions. Nationalism was, to all appearances, the dominant note at the Conference of the 21.

Today we concentrate our political thinking on the German problem, which is a secondary problem compared to the clash of empires which threatens us. But if tomorrow we resolve the Russo-American conflict, we may see ourselves once more outdistanced. Already the clash of empires is in process of becoming secondary to the clash of civilizations. Everywhere the colonial peoples are asserting themselves. Perhaps in ten years, perhaps in fifty, the dominance of Western civilization itself will be called into question. We might as well recognize this now, and admit these civilizations into the world parliament, so that its code of law may become truly universal, and a universal order be established.

The veto issue in the U.N. today is a false issue because the conflicting majorities and minorities are false. The USSR will always have the right to reject majority rule so long as it is a majority of ministers and not a majority of peoples, all peoples, represented by their delegates. Once such a majority comes into being, then each nation must obey it or else reject its law—that is, openly proclaim its will to dominate. . . .

To reply once more and finally to the accusation of Utopia: for us, the choice is simple—Utopia or the war now being prepared by antiquated modes of thought. . . . Sceptical though we are (and as I am), realism forces us to this Utopian alternative. When our Utopia has become part of history, as with many others of like kind, men will find themselves unable to conceive reality without it. For history is simply man's desperate effort to give body to his most clairvoyant dreams.

7. A New Social Contract

ALL contemporary political thinking which refuses to justify lies and murder is led to the following conclusions: (1) domestic policy is in itself a secondary matter; (2) the only problem is the creation of a world order which will bring about those lasting reforms which are the distinguishing mark of a revolution; (3) within any given nation there exist now only administrative problems, to be solved provisionally after a fashion, until a solution is worked out which will be more effective because more general.

For example, the French Constitution can only be evaluated in terms of the support it gives or fails to give to a world order based on justice and the free exchange of ideas. From this viewpoint, we must criticise the indifference of our Constitution to the simplest human liberties. And we must also recognize that the problem of restoring the food supply is ten times more important than such issues as nationalization or election figures. Nationalization will not work in a single country. And although the food supply cannot be assured either within a single country, it is a more pressing problem and calls for expedients, provisional though they may be.

And so this viewpoint gives us a hitherto lacking criterion by which to judge domestic policy. Thirty editorials in *Aube* may range themselves every month against thirty in *Humanité,* but they will not cause us to forget that both newspapers, together with the parties they represent, have acquiesced in the annexation without a referendum of Briga and Tenda, and that they are thus accomplices in the destruction of international democracy. Regardless of their good or bad intentions, Mr. Bidault and Mr. Thorez are both in favor of international dictatorship. From this aspect, whatever other opinion one may have of them, they represent in our politics not realism but the most disastrous kind of Utopianism.

Yes, we must minimize domestic politics. A crisis which tears the whole world apart must be met on a world scale. A social system for everybody which will somewhat allay each one's misery and fear is today our logical objective. But that calls for action and for sacrifices, that is, for men. And if there are many today who, in their secret hearts, detest violence and killing, there are not many who care to recognize that this forces them to reconsider their actions and thoughts. Those who want to make such an effort, however, will find in such a social system a rational hope and a guide to action.

They will admit that little is to be expected from present-day governments, since these live and act according to a murderous code. Hope remains only in the most difficult task of all: to reconsider everything from the ground up, so as to shape a living society inside a dying society. Men must therefore, as individuals, draw up among themselves, within frontiers and across them, a new social contract which will unite them according to more reasonable principles.

The peace movement I speak of could base itself, inside nations, on work-communities and, internationally, on intellectual communities; the former, organized cooperatively, would help as many individuals as possible to solve their material problems, while the latter would try to define the values by which this international community would live, and would also plead its cause on every occasion.

More precisely, the latter's task would be to speak out clearly against the confusions of the Terror and at the same time to define the values by which a peaceful world

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may live. The first objectives might be the drawing up of an international code of justice whose Article No. 1 would be the abolition of the death penalty, and an exposition of the basic principles of a sociable culture ("civilisation du dialogue"). Such an undertaking would answer the needs of an era which has found no philosophical justification for that thirst for fraternity which today burns in Western man. There is no idea, naturally, of constructing a new ideology, but rather of discovering a style of life.

Let us suppose that certain individuals resolve that they will consistently oppose to power the force of example; to authority, exhortation; to insult, friendly reasoning; to trickery, simple honor. Let us suppose they refuse all the advantages of present-day society and accept only the duties and obligations which bind them to other men. Let us suppose they devote themselves to orienting education, the press and public opinion toward the principles outlined here. Then I say that such men would be acting not as Utopians but as honest realists. They would be preparing the future and at the same time knocking down a few of the walls which imprison us today. If realism be the art of taking into account both the present and the future, of gaining the most while sacrificing the least, then who can fail to see the positively dazzling realism of such behavior?

Whether these men will arise or not I do not know. It is probable that most of them are even now thinking things over, and that is good. But one thing is sure: their efforts will be effective only to the degree they have the courage to give up, for the present, some of their dreams, so as to grasp the more firmly the essential point on which our very lives depend. Once there, it will perhaps turn out to be necessary, before they are done, to raise their voices.

8. Towards Sociability

YES, we must raise our voices. Up to this point, I have refrained from appealing to emotion. We are being torn apart by a logic of History which we have elaborated in every detail—a net which threatens to strangle us. It is not emotion which can cut through the web of a logic which has gone to irrational lengths, but only reason which can meet logic on its own ground. But I should not want to leave the impression, in concluding, that any program for the future can get along without our powers of love and indignation. I am well aware that it takes a powerful prime mover to get men into motion and that it is hard to throw one's self into a struggle whose objectives are so modest and where hope has only a rational basis—and hardly even that. But the problem is not how to carry men away; it is essential, on the contrary, that they not be carried away but rather that they be made to understand clearly what they are doing.

To save what can be saved so as to open up some kind of future—that is the prime mover, the passion and the sacrifice that is required. It demands only that we reflect and then decide, clearly, whether humanity's lot must be made still more miserable in order to achieve far-off and shadowy ends, whether we should accept a world bristling with arms where brother kills brother; or whether, on the contrary, we should avoid bloodshed and misery as much as possible so that we give a chance for survival to later generations better equipped than we are.

For my part, I am fairly sure that I have made the choice. And, having chosen, I think that I must speak out, that I must state that I will never again be one of those, whoever they be, who compromise with murder, and that I must take the consequences of such a decision. The thing is done, and that is as far as I can go at present. Before concluding, however, I want to make clear the spirit in which these articles are written.

We are asked to love or to hate such and such a country and such and such a people. But some of us feel too strongly our common humanity to make such a choice. Those who really love the Russian people, in gratitude for what they have never ceased to be—that world leaven which Tolstoy and Gorky speak of—do not wish for them success in power-politics, but rather want to spare them, after the ordeals of the past, a new and even more terrible bloodletting. So, too, with the American people, and with the peoples of unhappy Europe. This is the kind of elementary truth we are liable to forget amidst the furious passions of our time.

Yes, it is fear and silence and the spiritual isolation they cause that must be fought today. And it is sociability ("le dialogue") and the universal intercommunication of men that must be defended. Slavery, injustice and lies destroy this intercourse and forbid this sociability; and so we must reject them. But these evils are today the very stuff of History, so that many consider them necessary evils. It is true that we cannot "escape History," since we are in it up to our necks. But one may propose to fight within History to preserve from History that part of man which is not its proper province. That is all I have tried to say here. The "point" of these articles may be summed up as follows:

Modern nations are driven by powerful forces along the roads of power and domination. I will not say that these forces should be furthered or that they should be obstructed. They hardly need our help and, for the moment, they laugh at attempts to hinder them. They will, then, continue. But I will ask only this simple question: what if these forces wind up in a dead end, what if that logic of History on which so many now rely turns out to be a will o' the wisp? What if, despite two or three world wars, despite the sacrifice of several generations and a whole system of values, our grandchildren—supposing they survive—find themselves no closer to a world society? It may well be that the survivors of such an experience will be too weak to understand their own sufferings. Since these forces are working themselves out and since it is inevitable that they continue to do so, there is no reason why some of us should not take on the job of keeping alive, through the apocalyptic historical vista that stretches before us, a modest thoughtfulness which, without pretending to solve everything, will constantly be prepared to give some human meaning to everyday life. The essential thing is that people should carefully weigh the price they must pay.

To conclude: all I ask is that, in the midst of a murderous world, we agree to reflect on murder and to make a choice. After that, we can distinguish those who accept the consequences of being murderers themselves or the accomplices of murderers, and those who refuse to do so

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with all their force and being. Since this terrible dividing-line does actually exist, it will be a gain if it be clearly marked. Over the expanse of five continents throughout the coming years an endless struggle is going to be pursued between violence and friendly persuasion, a struggle in which, granted, the former has a thousand times the chances of success than that of the latter. But I have always held that, if he who bases his hopes on human nature is a fool, he who gives up in the face of circumstances is a coward. And henceforth, the only honorable course will be to stake everything on a formidable gamble: that words are more powerful than munitions.

(*Translated by Dwight Macdonald*)

On Hiroshima

by Georges Bataille

LET us face it; the population of hell is annually increased by some fifty million souls. A world war may accelerate the rhythm slightly, but cannot precipitate it. The ten millions killed in the war from 1914 to 1918 must be compared with the two hundred millions who, during the same period, were fated to die natural deaths. People speak of the evil effects of science; these remain outweighed by its benefits. The average span of life in the 17th Century was considerably lower than it is today. In those days all sorts of plagues decimated human life.

Since such is the case, the relative apathy of the masses is not so surprising. Consumed by the desire to react against the impotence we find everywhere, we forget that the margin of misfortune we might conceivably control is relatively small; the kernel of darkness remains inaccessible. Who would not liberate the world from fear? This task takes precedence over all others. And yet! The most ardent of the would-be liberators are not so deeply troubled as they would like to be, while the masses merely shake their heads. The last two wars broke out in spite of the general desire for peace; the mass murder that took place revolted the popular consciousness and yet the great dread that these wars inspired was nevertheless a sheepish, inconsistent dread . . . and swaddled in curiosity.

The horror of these events must have left the world quivering with fright—in principle, at least. (In the last analysis, what *is* the principle?). Nevertheless, the result has been that the desire to avoid any more such experiences has become more numbed than ever. We live in darkness now, without fear and without hope. Even political parties no longer have the heart to use the "struggle against war" as an instrument of propaganda. They no longer anathematize war with the blind passion of faith. In fact, they have nothing to say about preventing it; they prefer to attract (might one not say, to distract?) our attention to more immediate problems. We continue to cry needlessly for "wise men," failing to see what really matters; we are like the patient in the Hiroshima hospital who, as Hersey describes, was desperately afraid that he had syphilis (this time was on August 6, 1945, just before 8:15 A.M.). But this man, who died a moment later from an entirely different cause, could not possibly know what was in store for him. Our case is different. We know. And it is due to our lack of imagination, our insensate frivolity that, whimpering, we busy ourselves with "blood tests." Such, at least, is what the "wise men" keep telling us.

But the enlightened wisdom of the "sages" is not always more correct than the blind wisdom of the people. The levity with which the problems of atomic power are generally faced—levity in a relative sense, when the importance of the problem is taken into consideration—is not this levity itself taken lightly? The double tide of panic (in the realm of discourse) and indifference (almost total in the realm of action, and quite real in the realm of feeling) is almost the same as it was ten years ago. Might one not have exaggerated the eventual consequences of the atom bomb? (One even fears—rather proudly—the destruction of the globe. We can no more exclude the possibility of such a denouement than we can that of a cosmic cataclysm. But for the moment, the chances of a global explosion, of either human or celestial origin, are still very slight.) The blind wisdom of the masses is perhaps the better wisdom when it leads them to react as if losses of life and material goods can in no case put an end to civilization. Civilization is no longer synonymous with an aristocracy painfully maintaining order in an empire sheltered from the invasions of nomadic tribes. The world that would survive the torrents of bombs could not be the wasteland some have described. And we have been too quick to believe that the moral resources of man are not equal to even a truly insane experience. It seems to me that Albert Camus is wrong in asserting unreservedly: ". . . the coming war will leave humanity so mutilated and so impoverished that the very idea of law and order will become anachronistic" (COMBAT, 26-11-46, in the remarkable series of articles entitled, *Neither Victims nor Executioners*). And yet. . . .

The possibility of seeing the world delivered up to uranium obviously justifies some general reaction. And it is strange that, in the atmosphere of uneasiness in which we now live, the human voice, which was formerly so potent when it summoned men to sacred war or to revolution, no longer has the slightest force, even if it should speak for the most significant cause in history. The leaders of the smallest and weakest parties evoke some echoes, but one does not even see *born* the movement that would meet the deep anxiety of the modern world with acts as well as with phrases.

It is clear that between the mind's habitual standards

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of measurement and the possibilities of atomic power there is a disproportion that makes the imagination wander deliriously in its attempt to grasp the ungraspable. On the other hand, the remoteness of the places where the bombs fell is not merely geographic in character.One cannot deny that the spiritual bonds between the Nipponese world and our own are very tenuous. Consequently, the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki provoke our thoughts more than our feelings. Had they fallen on Bordeaux or on Bremen, we would not tend to regard the use of the atom bombs as a quasi-scientific experiment. The Americans, geographically closer to Japan, linked to the Japanese by those sad ties created by their mutual attempts to destroy each other, and obsessed by the awareness of having invented, manufactured and launched the bombs, are far more unhappy than the French: their nervous sensibility is affected. (Similarly with the British, who were deeply involved in the war against Japan and in the invention of the atomic weapon). Thus the little book by John Hersey —the first to give a meticulously precise account of the experiences of the victims, an account made up of a complex network of details—corresponds more to the problems of the Anglo-Saxons than to those of the French. Yet it is of greater interest to the French, who most lack what in essence this book provides: a concrete description of the cataclysm. . . .

Hersey conforms to the methodology of modern journalism. (The American effort to give reportage a foundation of rigorously factual detail is almost unknown in France). He reduces his description to a succession of scenes recorded by the memories of his witnesses. The method he uses achieves this notable result: the recollections that the author reports with the most praiseworthy care are reduced to the level of *animal* experience. The *human* description of the catastrophe was that given by President Truman; it placed the destruction of Hiroshima in its historical context and defined the new possibilities that it had introduced into the world. The description provided by Mr. Tanimoto, on the other hand, has only *emotional* value, since in it *intelligence* is limited to the role of misunderstanding. Error is the human aspect in the experiences described, and what stands out as true is what the memory of any animal would have retained. The entire first chapter, in which the recollections of various witnesses follow one another, all dealing with the fall of the bomb and the moments following (according to a descriptive technique which Jean-Paul Sartre's *Le Sursis* introduced in France), presents the perspective of the *animal,* walled-in, deprived, by an error, of passage into the future through the understanding of an event that significantly affected the destiny of man. This fundamental difference likewise separates the description of the battle of Waterloo in *The Charterhouse of Parma* from the historical account of that event. But a particular aim *humanizes* Stendhal's battle; he appeals to another kind of *human* interest; his famous narrative finds a *historical* place within the truly human description for the otherwise quasi-animal perspective of the individual. . . .

On first reading *Hiroshima,* I was struck by this: if there had been no other reasons for my being affected, the scene of horror would *in itself* have left me more or less indifferent. As it was, I read with anguish, as if in contact with the most oppressive reality. For I was in the know, and so experienced all the banal reactions of one conscious of the possibilities created by the manufacture of atomic bombs. I realized then that the annual death of fifty million human beings has no human meaning. (This, indeed, we cannot avoid—and if we could, we should soon be made aware that the effect of preventing such deaths would be worse than a thousand Hiroshimas, since the simple fact is that innumerable deaths are essential for the uninterrupted renewal of life.) But the deaths of the sixty thousand victims in Hiroshima are charged with meaning, in that those victims depended on the decision of their fellowmen to kill them or to let them live. The atom bomb gets its meaning from its human origin: it represents the possibility that the *hands of man* are on the point of deliberately grasping the future. And it is an instrument of action. The fear created by tidal floods or volcanic eruptions has no significance, for the tidal wave and the volcano do not create fear *in order to* compel surrender. Whereas uranium fission is a project whose objective is to impose by means of fear the will of those who provoke the fear. At the same time it puts an end to the projects of those whom it strikes. It is as a symbol of possible projects, and as a means of making other projects impossible, that an atom bomb acquires *human* significance. Otherwise it would merely have the *animal* significance of smoking out termites.

If we go along with John Hersey's narrative, the disproportionate effect soon takes us into the depths of the anthill. Those who witnessed the event, enduring its impact without dying, no longer possessed the necessary strength to form an intelligent image of their misfortune: they submitted to it as the ant submits to the unintelligible destruction of the anthill. At first, they thought what was happening was being caused by ordinary bombs; then it appears they realized the enormity of the disaster, but without, for all that, being able to recover from a kind of inhuman daze. It is probable that the all too natural vertigo which the idea of catastrophe produces—that this requires on the one hand enough proximity for the sensitive imagination to operate, and on the other, a minimum degree of immunity. But at Hiroshima, horror attained the point where reflection, which demands sustained concern, and beyond concern, that hope which is its foundation, could only carry on feebly. One must read Hersey's book entirely; short excerpts do not convey the complexity of the facts, monstrous or slight. . . . Finally, it appears that whatever humanity could be sustained by the unfortunate Hiroshimans, had to be laboriously asserted against a background of animal daze. . . .

At first sight one imagines that there is an emotional element lacking in the historically intelligible descriptions of the catastrophe, an element that only purely qualitative descriptions provide and without which reflection has no effect (since it is not followed by the necessary intense reactions). But one soon realizes that the appeal to the emotions is of negligible value. In fact it is actually at the expense of effective action that emotion enriches the feelings of those who are depressed, since reflection creates either a virile attitude, or none at all. . . . And it may be

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said with assurance that the most vivid imagination can place only a negligible force at the service of those who wish to avert the recurrence of evil. But the sensibility that goes to the extreme moves away from politics and, as in the case of the suffering animal, the world at one point is to it nothing more than an immense absurdity, shut on itself. But the sensibility that seeks a way out through political action always has bad faith. It deceives, but the deception is glaringly apparent. One cannot fail to see that in serving political ends it is no more than a *servile* sensibility—at best a subordinated one. If the misery of Hiroshima is envisaged freely from the perspective of a sensibility that is not merely pretending, it cannot be isolated from misery in general. The tens of thousands of victims of the atom bomb are on the same plane as the tens of millions whom nature yearly hands over to death. One cannot of course deny the differences of age and of suffering, but questions of origin or of intensity change nothing: horror is everywhere the same. The point that, in principle, the one horror is preventable while the other is not, is, in the last analysis, a matter of indifference. The standpoint of the *sovereign sensibility,* which has nothing in common with sentimentality, or even with pity—since these are equivocal—seems to me to have been perfectly expressed by Malraux when he said to the communists: "At this moment, what do you do about the man run over by a train?" Malraux was wrong to confront the communists with this difficulty, since they frankly subordinate emotion to reason. But the objection would be valid if addressed to those who think that they act in obedience to their feelings.

In truth, if one singles out Hiroshima as an isolated reason for lamentation, it is because one does not dare to look misfortune in the face—that profound absurdity of misfortune that is not only the evitable result of the destruction caused by war, but is an integral component of human existence. Thus one takes refuge in the world of activity, a world which the principles of a virile reason can completely dominate. But in so doing, instead of meeting the problem of the unendurable nature of the horrible, one merely serves the ends of a narrow ideology. The man of equivocal sensibility is also the man who believes in his civilization and supports it out of habit, not venturing any deeper into thought than he does into feeling. Since he does not take the trouble to reexamine his faith, he fails to note that civilization is made up of autonomous ideologies which oppose and exclude each other. He knows that evil exists, but he prefers not to see that the "civilization" which he contrasts with the savagery of war is this very civilization which no idealistic revery can deflect, and which, because of the conflicting elements that compose it, is itself the source of war. More precisely and also more generally, it may be said that he defends human systems that are based on anxiety for the future, on the anguished awareness of evils that may persevere, and therefore on the periodical trimming down of human possibilities. I do not mean that such systems should not be defended, nor that one can simply cease to think about the future. But the anguish and anxiety that motivate civilization continually demand certain patterns of activity, and the State, once it recognizes the necessity for such activity, never permits the individual to neglect it. Each civilized unity (that is, each civilization) insists on the primacy of its undertakings (by means of which it hopes to make the future secure) over all emotional considerations. Which means that, whenever it is forced to choose between the horrors of war and the renunciation of any of the activities through which it believes it can achieve security, society chooses war. The exceptions result either from the impossibility of conducting a military struggle, from blunders, or from the apparent insignificance of concessions. Each nation responds unreservedly to the exigencies of practical activity, and gives only a minimum consideration to the demands of sensibility. It may seem strange that anxiety for the nation's future should have the immediate effect of diminishing the individual's chances of survival. But this is precisely the manifestation of human indifference toward the present moment—this moment, in which we suffer and in which we die. Thus the need to make life secure prevails over the need to live. . . . But, in serving the cause of the very evils we strive to avoid, have we the right to think of these evils as avoidable? (In the last analysis, nothing is ever really avoidable.)

But if it is true that the sensibility is caught in a blind alley, if subordination to principles external to feeling is finally disappointing, it does not follow that the refusal to subordinate feelings to principles opens a way. On the contrary, the attitude that makes feeling supreme blocks every possible escape from misfortune—that is, it scorns the illusion that a way out exists. In truth, the moment of sovereign sensibility differs in every respect from that of servile sentimentality. In a sense, it is quite close to pure animal feeling since it is similarly free from rational limitations—that is, from all practical anxiety. Like the animal, the man of sovereign sensibility does not look beyond the present moment. He is not interested when one offers him, as compensation for the misfortune that *is*, a happiness that *will be*. For him, any valid response to misfortune must have meaning here and now. But he is profoundly unlike the animal in that the immediate or animal sensibility, by definition, is that which reason controls—as soon as the creature reaches the level of rationality—while the sovereign sensibility is above reason, which it admits within the limits of practical action, but which it transcends and subordinates. However it is only natural that the true sensibility should at first take the form of sentimentality. In a sense, its first movement is the vain revolt of a feeling remaining within the limits imposed by reason. But this impotent drive, which tries to behave as if it were rational and thus remains ineffectual with regard to its own needs, is liberated from reason when the emotion cuts too deep. And it is not surprising that this liberation occurs almost at the very moment when the sensibility experiences this new proof of its own uselessness: when it sees military science improve the instruments of destruction to an unprecedented point. In fact, the man of sovereign sensibility is not unrelated to the coming into being of the atomic bomb.* His extreme character corresponds to the extreme character of the sciences, and of reason itself.

* It is interesting to note that the "man of sovereign sensibility," being the "man of the instant," may, by a play on words, also be called "the man of the atom," since the Greek word, "atom," served to designate the *instant*. (Aristotle and St. Paul used it in this sense).

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In endeavoring now to describe the attitude of the sovereign sensibility, I may evoke the "crucial" emotional experience of the Christian meditation on the Cross, or that of the Buddhist meditation on the boneheap. Both these meditations, far from plunging the spirit into the depths of despair, create a passage and a rapid movement of "communicating vases" from extreme anguish to "the joy that transcends joy." But the Christian or the Buddhist sensibility presupposes, if not a fixed relationship of subordination, at least a fundamental concession to the sovereignty of reason. Both condemn the moment, the immediately existant, the world here and now; they condemn the sensible world, which they bring in one and the same movement to the farthest limits of the possible, and they can condemn it only in the name of the truths of an intelligible sphere. But such a deception is not easy to carry out—at any rate, it is not so easy when the crisis of the sensibility reaches the point where it becomes unendurable. Then it is the instant, such as it is, without verbal formulation and without possibility of escape, that imprisons the being and, when one reaches the most extreme state of feeling, can be neither stabilized nor compensated by what follows afterwards. Nietzsche performed the first test of this experience; or at least he was the first to describe it with some degree of clarity. The state of absolute misery and absolute ecstasy intimately commingled, into which the idea of "eternal recurrence" would plunge him, is at first difficult to understand. Apparently, the same idea, communicated to numerous readers, does not deeply affect their sensibilities. Nevertheless it is both possible and necessary to identify Nietzsche's experience with the moment of sovereign sensibility, in which the immediate present is lived without attempt at evasion. However, this "mystical state" of Nietzsche* differs from the Buddhist or Christian religious states only in that here there is a sudden discovery of the deception of the sensibility by reason (this discovery being made possible by the aggravation of the difficulty of access to a rational solution): the instant, the moment of feeling, is sovereign here, no longer attempting to shift the burden that crushes it over to a reality—or a nothingness—that excludes chance. And that which in such a perfect gamble makes ecstasy inevitable, liberating it like a burst of light, transforming unimaginable exhaustion into radiance, is the suppression of all hope. (Hope, conceived negatively here, being nothing more than postponement). If the unrelieved instant before me, or rather within me, like a spinning die, at each throw carries with it eternity in its fall—if there is no reprieve and if the rationalized future of the world cannot bridge the gap between the instant and the realm of all possibilities—then nothing matters *more than* this cry, which fills the air like the wind or the sunlight and, powerless though it be, leaves no room for fear, that is to say, for practical anxiety. But if such be the case, if there surges within me a boundless anguish that is joy, or a joy that is infinite anguish, if I say, if I cannot help but say: "Nothing matters more than this joy that situates me," my assertion places me directly at the point where my sensibility meets its most difficult test. But this point cannot *now* be the anguish of Christ nailed to the Cross, which a mythological didacticism eulogizes, nor the humble boneheap of the Buddhist, but rather, if one likes, the unparalleled horror of Hiroshima. Not because one particular horror need of itself grip me more than another that is less striking, but because the Hiroshima catastrophe has, in fact, seized the attention of my fellowmen, just as a lamp attracts a swarm of insects. It is not surprising therefore that Hersey's book, *Hiroshima,* has the value of a lamp in the sense referred to: I imagine that for a while it will give an unendurable brilliance to the possibilities of human suffering; indeed it is the sign and the symbol of all human suffering, of which even the terrible events at Hiroshima make up a very small part. And if it is necessary to set the cry of the instant on the plane of the unendurable, the feeling evoked by "Hiroshima" may pass for a valid, if superficial, expression of it.

At this point the first aspect of a total attitude becomes clear: the man of sovereign sensibility, when face to face with misfortune, no longer immediately exclaims, "At all costs let us suppress it," but first, "Let us live it." In the instant of ecstasy, let us raise an aspect of life to the level of the worst. . . .

(*Translated by R. Raziel*)

* In this case, the meaning of the word "mystical" is uniquely connected with the emotional state. Nietzsche wrote (Posthumous Notes, 1884): "The new feeling of power: the mystical state; and the most lucid, the most daring rationalism providing the path by which to attain it."

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The Days of Our Death

by David Rousset

NICOLAS, the Luxemburger, twisted his lips in a sad smile. He liked Victor. This tall well-built boy, open-faced, full of dangerous naïveté, amused him. He had found him not only firm in what he conceived to be his political and human obligation, but astute as well. His head was not in the clouds, and Nicolas liked such even temperaments, capable of both firmness and flexibility, and which could be depended upon to act with measure in all circumstances. Unfortunately, the French, even the best of them, seemed incapable of understanding what life under a dictatorship really was. They had clung for the most part to their democratic ways under the Occupation. Even the cold shower of arrest hadn't done much to modify their reflexes, a fact which made the camps risky for them. This was what had to to be patiently explained.

"Don't think, Victor, that we have the same hold on other camps as on Buchenwald. Dora, though subordinated to this camp, is run exclusively by the greens (common criminals). From *Lagerälteste* (Senior Trusties) and *Kapos* (squad leaders) right down to *Stubendienste* (Room Trusties), cooks, and barbers, they are all greens. Believe me, Dora isn't called Buchenwald's Hell without reason. Dora is a great subterranean factory for secret weapons, and whoever built it or works there might just as well be dead. For them, there is no returning; and their mouths are forever stopped. Of course, it's possible we'll change all that one of these days, but it's going to be very difficult. The S.S. doesn't trust politicals. It concedes their possible superiority to criminals, but it can never be quite sure of them. Besides, German politicals are usually communists, and to the S.S., once a communist, always a communist—because even a broken communist is never free of a feeling of guilt where the Party is concerned. The *Schutzstafel* won't step in until things become unbearable, a possibility that can never be excluded when common criminals are in the saddle. The criminals run Mauthausen, too; and believe me, their stone quarry is something to see. They're in charge at Birkenau, which is without doubt the world's most ingenious center of destruction. On the other hand, we partially or totally control Sachsenhausen, Dachau, Neuengamme. But I think our power has found its classic expression at Buchenwald. Something that wasn't easily achieved. I'll tell you some day about the extraordinary Walter Kraemer. When the fight was hottest, he championed the politicals. He was pitiless, but his friends could count on him. He took every kind of chance and paid for it. One day the S.S. shot him. You can't imagine the camps then. You think it's Hell when you first get here—and Hell it is, of course—but compared to what was, it has some of the amenities of Purgatory. We had a Doctor Glauberg, an S.S., who was an extermination specialist. He strolled around Buchenwald, pausing whenever he met a group. The men would salute. Leisurely he would look them over with his cold blue eyes, which, by the time he finally picked one, had grown more benevolent. He would question his unsuspecting victim about his health, his work, his family. Then he would write down the man's number, explaining that he would try to place the man in a better situation. Then placidly, like a genial squire, Glauberg would continue his round. He took a quiet interest in others, walking about until tired. Later he would summon them all to the Infirmary, where he killed them personally by intravenous injections. It was all a whim. He also kept a stout well-fed thug at the door of the Infirmary. It was his job to beat to death anyone who showed signs of surviving the injection. The in-patients were just killed, that was all. The Infirmary's single function was to kill. Now that you yourself now practice there, you can testify that murder goes on regularly.But once that was all that was done there. Today it's possible to cure someone. Then, as detachments were assigned in the morning, the S.S. kicked and whipped all the Mohamedans to death. Work was just one long race. The formations lasted hours, all night. You might be awakened no matter when, and rushed outside for a whipping. Under such circumstances, we have been forced to fight for our lives. All of us are really sentenced to death, Victor. Were the S.S. to win this battle, we should all die. It's foolish to think these camps are for temporary punishment. That would be a big mistake. The S.S. doesn't like to kill too fast. It prefers slow murder. Death can take its time. But by not shooting right away, by not hanging or poisoning all of us at once, the S.S. permits a society to live."

"But why, actually, doesn't the S.S. kill us right off?" Victor asked. "I've wondered ever since they brought me here."

"Because the fact of death doesn't release enough terror. Whole avenues of hanged men are insufficient. People grow surfeited with death. But to know that a man may have to endure daily torture for years, that's effective. It took some such spectre, ever visible, to unnerve their people and finally, to stupefy them. And, then, an enemy isn't the same to the S.S. as to us. We kill him or put him where he is harmless. But to the S.S. we are evil incarnate. We must atone for our sins, and eke out our

* Extracts from a book published under the title, "Les Jours de Notre Mort," parts of which appeared in *Les Temps Modernes*. The facts are historically accurate. The book was substantially elaborated during sixteen months at Buchenwald, Porta Westphalia, Neuengamme, and Halmstedt-Woebbelin; it is also based on verified eye-witness accounts about most of the large camps.

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chastised existences until death. We are to die persuaded that we are bad, thoroughly bad, discarded by humanity. The concentration camps are high altars of expiation. Here, the S.S. finds its rarest gratification. You have to have lived through the German crisis to understand this mentality. One night, right after Hitler had taken power and I had been arrested in Berlin, a young worker was led into my cell. He wasn't more than nineteen or twenty. He seemed to be in terrible pain. We had to lay him down in the corner. I noticed, as I carried him, that the nails were torn off one hand. Then he asked to piss; we held him up and he unbuttoned his fly. Nothing could be seen but raw, bleeding flesh. They thought it great fun to fill his bladder until it burst. That takes hate, Victor, and you'll find its seeds in the human rubble of Germany after the last war.

"The French can't understand what it meant in Germany for thousands of merchants, craftsmen, lawyers, teachers to lose everything. The moral and material foundations of their lives had been completely swept away. They had been reared on the notion of their social superiority, and now they found themselves lower than the workers. And they refused, they were absolutely dead-set against social death, this proletarianization. Hate was their refuge. They consoled themselves with their prejudices. Jews, democrats, communists became the wicked agents of their disinheritance, the Machiavellian instigators of their misfortunes. If they could get hold of a Jew, democrat, or communist, they nearly tore him to bits. That they could think of forcing a former Reichstag President to mimic a dog is symptomatic of their formidable inferiority complex, their obsessive spite; such is the extent of their illness. They are fighting this war as if it were a civil war, with the same furious venom. If they knew they had only twenty-four hours to go, they would still find a supreme drunkenness in our drawn-out deaths. No armchair observer, only we who have *lived* Germany can understand this. They won't give up. Ask any German communist if Hitler will compromise, if Hitler, at the final moment, will leave the stage. The answer will always be no. This is a fight to the finish, Victor—mark me well, for illusions in concentration camps are usually fatal. Of course, the S.S. has come to regard us as a manpower reservoir. But that's secondary. Furthermore, we constitute a voiceless manpower, whose silence is carefully assured. In the manufacture of secret weapons, that's a weapon itself. But even this advantage, faced with the main consideration, fades in their eyes. You must begin with this fact, Victor, in order to understand anything else: we have been solemnly consecrated to death. Our chance, such as it is, rests in the fact that the S.S. employs time in its tortures. We can utilize time too. The S.S. has forced us into a certain milieu. We neither wanted nor created this milieu. But it would be foolish, on the pretext that it is abominable, to try to ignore it. Nor would we be allowed to, in any case. And in a K-Z society,* the question of survival immediately raises the question of power. At the beginning, the people here were mostly Jews, gypsies, delinquents, homosexuals, pimps, thieves, criminals. We fought them first. They were like wild dogs. They wanted to survive too. But each of them put a higher value on his own life than on that of the others. Each was for himself, and Devil take the hindmost. They instituted and developed gangster methods. We, the politicals, not only had our own skins to preserve, but our collectivity, our ideas. That was both our strength and weakness. The criminals knew they could count on the complicity of the S.S. The S.S. knew it could exact and expect everything from the criminals. To combat them, we had to meet fire with fire but our terror was disciplined and collective, while theirs was individual and disorganized. Criminals always yield to their personal desires. By assisting them to get their particular pleasures, we compromised them with the S.S. to whom they became a scandal and embarrassment. Criminals can murder and make trouble, but they can't organize. We proved our aptitude for direction and discipline. The S.S. is lazy: we exploited its laziness. We became quite indispensable to the administration; gradually, we gained decisive posts. Then we highlighted the criminals' "differences"; soon divided, they were shortly controlled. Today, from our eminence, we are always ready for trouble, and can out maneuvre our enemies, direct necessary retreats, prepare suitable camouflages, and work toward our end—that is, to survive.

"But," asked Victor, "haven't you really defeated yourselves? If you run down the criminals just to take their places, don't you become them? Don't misunderstand me. I know *you*. I can't think it's true of you, but what about the others?"

"No, Victor, it's no defeat. It couldn't be. We've lost a lot of men in this battle for power. Some are dead; many of them weakened. Don't cast your stone when you don't know how much we've had to endure. And after you see how fast your own countrymen succumb; maybe you'll understand. I'm not German myself, but my whole political life has been mixed up with the German drama, and I know the people well. It's extraordinary that a half-dozen of us can still resist, a real victory."

"How far has your resistance gone? To the point where humanity is left behind?"

"We have resisted to the limit. Some failed early by recanting or by betraying us. They accepted the S.S. propositions, and denied their beliefs in order to get out of the camps. They aren't so numerous, though most of us had the same chance. Among those who didn't accept, some slipped doing business for the S.S. They were contaminated, and occasionally they were nazified. Others stuck to their guns, refusing to deal with the S.S.; only their nerves didn't hold out. They became sick men, affected by such loathing for the K-Z world that every badge-wearer, every starving desperate phantom here nauseates them; and so today, they are helpless. But some of us are still in it, together, as men and revolutionaries."

"Listen," said Victor, "I'm a doctor. I've a responsible job at the Infirmary. As a physician I'm obliged to treat whoever come to me; anyone, no matter who, that stands a chance of being saved. If I'm ordered to discharge a patient, if it means his death, to make room for the less

* "La société concentrationnaire" in the original. Since "concentration society" makes no sense in English, we have translated this term as "K-Z society," from the German colloquialism, "K-Z Camp" (for "Konzentration Lager").

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critical case of some favorite—and it often happens—what am I to do? My duty as a physician compels me to refuse."

"You can't save everybody," Nicolas said. "It's unfortunate, but a fact. This is a special world, the concentration world, where you're absolutely forced to make some choice."

"But how choose, on what principle, that's the whole question?"

"The choice is, of necessity, political," Nicolas said.

"Even if the powers-that-be favor a hopeless criminal?"

"That's the same problem, in another aspect. How you solve it depends on circumstances. If refusal means your dismissal from the Infirmary, then you accept, since it's important for you—and for many others—that you keep your job there. You have to compromise, even if it means an injustice. For you, justice means that you remain at the Infirmary."

"And what kind of political criterion is that? Why is a communist worth more than another political? What justification do you have except partisanship—and you know *that* argument can work just as well for others?"

"I know it's hard for you to understand; especially since you're not a communist," replied Nicolas, smiling. "The fact, however, that you are at the Infirmary—and others, too, not all of them communists—shows you we aren't so terribly exclusive."

"You know all the trouble I've had with the French communists because I'm not pliable enough."

"I know," said Nicolas, laughing out loud. "But we always support you, which is what counts. Now the justification of our point-of-view is definitely related to the role we fill in society. The communists ought to live, and I'll go further, all authentic revolutionaries (I'm not for settling our little disagreements here. You know yourself how much I've done, in this department, to avoid purely partisan solutions) ought to live, since, in the society of today, together we represent the sole force of social emancipation, the only promise that this barbarism won't go on forever. Because we represent, in the bitter class struggle which gave rise to these camps, the backbone of the working class, the one social force able to overthrow this rotten society so that the world may live. The working class's justification is that its freedom means freedom for the full powers of life, not attainable any other way. This, then, is also our justification. It is fundamental to our philosophy. It gives us a criterion, by which to choose. Contrary philosophies, or contrary standards are S.S. property."

Nicolas stood up.

"We'll come back to that," he said. "I know you're not convinced; but I know you know how to think. May I simply remind you that certain things you find so scandalous here happen in bourgeois society every day. Roughly speaking, every disease has its cure. The rare medicine, the early diagnosis, the surgeon's skill, the nurse's care, the length and conditions of convalesence depend, often if not always, on the patient's financial means. Therefore. . . . ?"

Victor got up too.

"But we're all prisoners here. We're victims of the nazis one and all."

"Not exactly. The extent of one's awarness, one's actual part in the struggle—you'll admit that they count. But now, here where the politicals have some power, even if they are a bit tainted, aren't things better for you?"

"That's true."

"Well, so long, "said Nicholas. "Not many of us can argue like this—it cheers one up sometimes. But it wouldn't do, would it, to talk too much? Rule Number One here is: Silence." And he sauntered off with a friendly wave of his hand. Buttoning his leather jacket, he pushed through the snow, humming to himself the forbidden song which, if an S.S. man had heard a single bar, would have meant hanging. It was the slow chant of the underground, the bold and monotonous rhythm of their struggle:

O terre de détresse
Que nous devons sans cesse
Piocher. . . .

THE fist struck once again, and Rahm stiffened in silence.

Upon entering the office, Rahm had drawn himself to attention, cap off, as he should. He liked to show he knew the forms. In recognizing this complex code of respect, which is often violated in simple ignorance these days, he affirmed his position as an old *concentrationnaire,* schooled in his resistance.

Vogel, the S.S. Obersturmfuhrer, had risen at his entrance, and as Rahm stood there, walked noiselessly over and hit him in the face.

Rahm and Vogel were old acquaintances. They had first been introduced at Dachau, where Rahm was the inmate of cell 4, a former w.c. That was about six months after Hitler's rise to power. Vogel was just a regular S.S. then under Steinbrenner, the bloody brute, Eight years afterwards they had a reunion at Sachsenhausen, and finally, six months before, Vogel grabbed Rahm one morning in the big square at Buchenwald like a long lost friend

Rahm thought quickly. Right after call, the loudspeakers had roared his number. No one in Buchenwald liked to visit the Tower. It usually meant imprisonment, fresh torture, or hanging. Rahm's actions had not led him to expect anything from the Tower. All the way from his Block he had tried in vain to guess where the blow would fall, and now that he was there, S.S. Obersturmfuhrer Vogel's blank face told him nothing. Vogel stared with his cold little eyes, and in his thin tight lips, in his hard gray features there wasn't a hint. Then Vogel's fist lit out again. But the S.S. was going to speak.

"You lousy bastard," said Vogel.

Motionless, Rahm waited. The S.S. went over to his armchair and sat down. The room was warm, not hot, with a regular heat that sank in.

"So, Rahm, you're a lousy bastard."

Vogel propped his elbows on the table, and watched him. Rahm hesitated. He couldn't imagine what was behind the words, but one mistake from him might infuriate Vogel, and more blows.

"You remember Dressler?" Vogel demanded.

"That was a long time ago," Rahm said.

Dresseler—that was during the first weeks, at Dachau. His cell was next to Rahm's and every night, several times

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a night, Steinbrenner's men beat him senseless. They pounded his bare body until the throat rattled. Until, one morning, he made three gashes in his left wrist with a breadknife, and died. God, why was Vogel bringing up Dresseler now?

"Ten years," Vogel said. "Dresseler's dead, but you're here. Why are you?"

Rahm waited.

"You haven't guessed?"

"Because you want it that way," Rahm said.

Vogel smiled.

"All right, Rahm. Very well. We gave you ten years. But you don't know why?"

"No," Rahm said.

"Because we're easy-going. (Vogel had risen and was coming toward him). Because we're good to you, you lousy bastard."

The fist hit the mark, and blood ran down Rahm's cheek. This time it was his ear; the heavy ring on Vogel's finger had torn it. But Rahm noticed that the blood had appeased Vogel for the moment. The change was barely perceptible: a slight flicker on Vogel's face, indicating yet further news.

"You dirty asshole communist. Are you German, or aren't you? We're fighting for the life of the German people against the capitalists in London and Washington, against Jews and international finance. For God's sake, Rahm, you ought to be on our side. If we lose, what will happen? Then the crows swoop down on Germany, and pick the bones clean. If the Jews weren't in Moscow, Russia would be in it with us. We crack, and here's Stalin. They should know that in the Kremlin. And you, a German. Not one of those horseass French or Polish buggers."

Would Vogel propose, Rahm wondered, that he volunteer for the S.S. Waffen or for the Wehrmacht. That had happened to others, so he searched for his answer. He had to think fast.

"Why must you try to interfere with us? Why do you want to sabotage German morale? So as to be hanged? Hein?"

Vogel bent over a table, and picked a sheet of paper up. Rahm recognized the handwriting, elongated, of his wife.

"A letter from your wife. She hasn't heard from you for six months, and she worries. She writes for information to us. Shit, why haven't you written to your wife?"

Rahm was stupified, feeling, at the same time, like bursting into fits of laughter. So this was the story. They were furious because he hadn't written his wife!

He wanted to roar, to split *Vogel's* ears with laughter. The bastards. What a laugh. His family must be told he was fine and dandy, that the camps were comfortable, that he was working hard to sustain the superhuman efforts of the Third Reich. Shits.

"I realize," Rahm said, "that I'm in the wrong. I should have written my wife at least three times. I know it."

Vogel looked at him, his little eyes hard and cold.

"So you want to sabotage our morale. Your wife is a factory worker. If she doesn't hear from you, she doesn't work so good. She complains. She thinks those lies the enemy spreads about the camps are true."

"No," Rahm said. I was just tired. Ten years in camps. I've only been out six months, and that was even tougher. But it's my fault. Even though I am tired."

"Still, Buchenwald is better than Dachau in the old days?"

"That's true," Rahm said.

And that, in a way, made them accomplices. They could both remember.

"All right," Vogel said. "But watch out. Right now, you're going to sit down and write."

Rahm took a chair at the desk. Before him, on a shelf between some books, was a skull—very handsome—high forehead—the bone in good condition. Vogel began to dictate Rahm's letter to his wife.

"WHAT news?" Victor asked, closing the window.

"Nothing you don't know," said Nicolos. "Life is peaceful since they axed 47's Blockaltester. The old shit."

"He deserved it, wouldn't you say?"

"He couldn't, like certain others, adjust himself to the great change. He thought he was still in 41 or 42. He was a man of simple habits: took his men by the neck, beat their heads against a stone wall until they were dead."

"Dietzsch himself allows that."

"Yes, but Dietzsch's somebody. The 46 Kapo. And you know, don't you, that 46 is Himmler's special pet. Even at fifty, Dietzsch can still hold on to his power, and, believe me, he knows the ropes. He's not scared to take risks. He knows a great deal too much, however; the S.S. surely plans to do away with him in the end. He was one of Buchenwald's greatest murderers, so I imagine the Allies hope to get their hands on him, too. Truth will out, as they say, though I'll bet he gets off somehow. Especially since he's equally compromised on both sides. The great services he does for us are deliberate, very far-sighted.

"That's just it," said Victor. "I can't help thinking that you, and we with you, to the extent we've gone along with you, are hopeless victims of equivocation. . . . The S.S. has been losing its hold. You've taken certain responsibilities over. And this has been advantageous for you, for us as well. But the responsibility, the criminal responsibility for these camps is what you may also share because of this equivocation. Isn't it exactly the S.S.'s scheme to drag us in when accounts have to be settled?"

"You like reason for its own sake, according to immutable principles. Where would you be if we hadn't intervened? The answer to this is the key to your problem, and it's not hard to find. Our situation would be no better than it was from '33 to '42. The torturers would be infinitely more savage, the deaths a hundred times higher. You, Richet and many other foreign doctors wouldn't be at the Infirmary. Perhaps Catzen might; he's the killer type."

"But the change in '42 wasn't merely the result of your pressure. There were purely external factors, like the new course of the war."

"I admit that, but again you can't seem to see more than

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one side of the picture. Hitler had been caught in a dilemma: how to mobilize the remaining able-bodied Germans, and also increase industrial production. Any man in his senses would have decided that he must fully utilize the cheap and available manpower in the camps. Confronted with the complaints of his own experts, and of the civil engineers, he had to give better rations to us. The S.S. had to open Infirmaries to look after its manpower. It was simply a production problem. There is, I admit, also a second factor which will become even more effective in the months to come: fear. Have you noticed the attitude of the Infirmary's lord-high S.S. doctor, Schiedlansky, these last few days? Pity the poor "responsible" official nowadays! Since your late pal was a big shot in France, Schiedlansky had to draw up a detailed report on his illness and death, and to get Czechs and Frenchmen to sign it. Amusing—and significant. He wouldn't have done all this three months ago—one big shot more or less, so what? There are also other considerations: the Allied air offensive has paralyzed production, hereby creating the need for subterranean factories on a great scale, a scale demanding the mass employment of manpower for exceptionally hard work. And what manpower supply is better controlled, less protected by law, less capable of resisting pressure than the sources available in concentration camps? This element, too: after the United States came into the war, and mobilized its war-production machinery, the industrial disequilibrium which resulted has been increasing monthly in Germany's disfavor. Hitler has to depend more and more on secret weapons, and who can be so silent as a *concentrationnaire?* All told, the shift in attitude which substantially changed the camp regime between late '42 and early '43 was motivated by these particulars: to secure a workable exchange of prisoner for regimented civilian manpower, the need for factories to go underground, the role of the secret weapon as a quick, effective response to allied industrial might. . . . All right, when all this is said and done, what special good would it have done us? . . . The criminals might have seen their chance and reaped the benefits for themselves. They could have done it more easily since they were then in power. We improved our situation in a blow-for-blow battle. Peler, who was the commanding officer, didn't turn things over to us out of the kindness of his heart; in fact, he's pure swine. He had either to let us take charge, or to account to Berlin for a scandalous administration. A similar situation impelled his sadistic predecessor, Commander Koch, to depart, no small relief, I assure you. If only for the pleasure of not seeing Madam Koch roam around the camp. This worthy dame spent her time notting down the numbers of prisoners who were the possessors of interesting tattoos. She doted on tattoos. By evening, the unfortunates who had drawn her attention were spirited into the beyond with the Infirmary's merciful help, and Madam Koch converted their tattoos into lampshades or bindings.

"I'm not denying what you say, especially since the enormous, palpable advantages are right under my eyes. But are you really answering my question? The progress you proclaim makes Dietzsches inevitable. Your equivocation in this problem can't just be dismissed."

"The problem is partly a false one, in that you look at the question from the strictly personal angle of an individual. Certain responsibilities are too heavy for individual shoulders. We have got to assume them as a group. The party, or if you prefer, the faction, makes its decisions within the limits of collective responsibility. Individual justification lies in collective decisions, the justification of the Party in the ends its seeks to attain. And I can assure you that the real leaders are extremely careful to keep within fixed limits. Busse's duties were, and still are, frightful. He was Lagerältester at Buchenwald before he became Infirmary Kapo. In '42, to be exact. You've seen enough of him to know he's more than humane, considering how he's improved conditions. The same thing's true of Zelle, the Knieper brothers, Wegger, Robert. The Party doesn't excuse the Dietzsches, but why shouldn't it make the most of them? I mentioned Walter Krämer once. He was an amazing man who led the fiercest kind of battle in the midst of all kinds of corruption. He was the Infirmary Kapo in his time. By making up to them first, he contrived to get the "greens" under his thumb, and he aided the politicals' intrenchment infinitely. He even insisted that we make working agreements with the S.S., our worst enemy, in order to become a useful tool, in their eyes. He became one of its murderers. He was soon its Agent No. 1. He toured through Germany for it, changing money, trading securities, forming secret combines. He became the most powerful man in the concentration camp. So powerful that the S.S. found him a serious threat. But the S.S., which reigns supreme over us, didn't dare to hang him. He was sent down to the kiln one morning—you can see it there in the valley from this window. His friend Peix happened to go along with him. A machine-gun blasted at them from behind as they were walking through the snow down that road beyond the beech trees. The S.S. had finally trapped Krämer by shooting him in the back. His amazing talents had unfortunately carried him too far, and he had over-adapted himself to the K-Z society. The Party couldn't sanction his behavior, nor did it ever, so far as I know. His death, at any rate, reopened the question of power among us. Any one who tries to make use of corruption may be himself corrupted, but is that any reason to neglect this weapon, considering our situation? One thing, at least, safeguards *us* from corruption: our constant submission to the party, to collective responsibility. . . . Responsibilities have got to be shouldered collectively in K-Z society.

"What's good or bad must be determined collectively. There's no other way. Situated as we are, you know it would be criminal not to make the most of whatever advantages we have. All of us prisoners are employed in the storehouses. Our cliques organize the workers and keep the books. These storehouses are crammed with the rich spoils of Nazi plunder. . . . An S.S. caught stealing goods is liable to an S.S. trial. Fear gets the better of greed. Or he lacks the right chances. But the *concentrationnaire,* working there, is right on the spot. What's to keep him from stealing? . . . From using the proceeds to bribe his masters? Wilhelm, the S.S., pays a daily visit to the kitchen where our Kuchekapo secretly serves him better food than he's a right to expect. The Effektenkammer Kapo

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slips him shoes, clothes, underwear. And what happens? Wilhelm supervises the Infirmary. I think that it was last week that a friend of yours was called to the Tower. He'd be dead now if it weren't for Wilhelm. You got him to sign a report stating that your friend was dying and couldn't be moved. Today, the authorities haven't any idea that your friend's still alive. That's a dividend of our corruption. Is the investment paying off, or not?"

"If we fill a responsible job, we owe an accounting to every prisoner. No matter what we think, if the liberation ever comes, the prisoners will establish our degree of guilt. I see exactly how you justify yourselves in an equivocal situation imposed by reality itself: you retreat into the collective responsibility of your party, which has been transformed in your minds into the one acceptable tribunal —even though it is clearly subject to the higher court of camp opinion. You absolutely seem blinded by equivocation, and how you're going to get out of it, or for that matter, how we are, I don't know. We're not so guilty merely in that we're less able to interfere, and, as non-communists, live within limits imposed by you—it's really the basic principle that bothers me."

"We protect and give help to our comrades, the foreign communists, and allow them their own organizations where we're in power. That ought to justify us in the eyes of world communism. In any situation where we can really exert pressure, we work with non-communist foreigners, so far as possible, on the basis of their intrinsic worth and character. I imagine this effort will be intensified in the months to come. Surely, under us, living conditions have improved for everybody. That can be proved, and should justify us to the public. Can the prosecution question an individual attitude if that attitude has been determined by collective decision, and if, consequently, it takes on full meaning only as part of a larger plan? No, the prosecution will have to question the whole policy and the results emerging from it.

"You ask how we expect to make the majority understand us? This brings us to the nature of K-Z society. It is the perfect example of a well-defined oligarchy, based on an economic substructure of primitive barter in which social differentiations are essentially determined by food exchange. In it, all values are stood on their head. Under the obsessive weight of vital and elemental necessities (such as systematic rationing and the direct dependence of a sense of security upon one's productive powers) strictly intellectual values—namely, the speculative exercise of thought—are completely banished. They can have no outlet. On the contrary, they are often an object of contempt, and feared as factors of social death. Those who were once in liberal professions are forced to camouflage themselves, to conceal their origins, to efface every telltale trace of their former pursuits. Intellectual values can only retain their currency (and may, in this case, be highly prized) when they are transformed into technical or organizational abilities, that is, into means of collective action. A premium is automatically placed on technical capacities. An intellectual and militant political is worth more than a pure intellectual exactly to the degree that he can work with, and on, men. A claim to the title of precision-worker, turner, welder, or carpenter opens the door to favor and privilege.

"The narrowness of the economic base, together with conditions dictated by the S.S. superstructure, inevitably makes of open violence a fundamental social relationship.

"The S.S. metes out our individual and collective destinies from a Mt. Olympus of the concentration world. But like the ancient gods and men, the S.S. and the prisoners both share in the same nature, thus enabling a *concentrationnaire* to get a grip of a kind on an S.S. Also, the higher powers of the S.S. have their limits, as indeed the omnipotence of the gods was subject to a more profound fatality. The S.S. is the organic link between K-Z society, which it created, and the degenerate capitalist society which creates it. The convulsions of the latter echo along the Nazi path into the K-Z society, modify its components, even affect the S.S.'s sovereignty.

"Power relations among the top layers of K-Z society are, in the last analysis, a reflection of the social, political, military, and economic changes which take place in a decaying capitalist society; but the forms of power, the structure and methods, originate in the structure-proper of K-Z society. Oligarchy is inevitable. Depending upon circumstances, we may have an oligarchy of criminals, an oligarchy arising out of a compromise between criminals and politicals, or an oligarchy of politicals. The differences between these regimes may be decisive(and will depend on the type of ruling personnel and whatever they represent socially), but the nature of power is always uniform. The great mass cannot express itself directly or openly in any case. The slightest collective demonstration would lead to torture and death, both so horribly contrived as to paralyze any such initiative. Even the prevailing oligarchy must work in strictest secrecy. Then, too, most *concentrationnaires* can no longer think for themselves. Constant fear, hunger, slave-driving, beating, the impossibility of privacy, the absence of any real rest, have stripped them of all reactions except the most elementary reflexes, have reduced them to a level of torpor and of two *idées fixes*: to eat and to avoid being beaten. The social conditions of the K-Z world transform the great mass of prisoners—whatever their former position or unbringing—from the moment they are unable to share in some measure in the privileges of the K-Z oligarchy, into a degenerate plebs, moved only by the most primitive reflexes of animal instinct.

"Political strategy in such a society can only be the affair of the apparatus and of the top leaders. That is the answer to your question. Only indirectly can one affect the lot of the mass and only indirectly and within narrow limits can one appeal to the mass even to help save itself. The legitimacy and the justice of actions can therefore only be estimated within this context."

Victor and Nicolas fell silent. Nothing was simple except the extreme misery of every one. Twilight fell slowly. . . . Outside, cries arose from Kommandos returning from work. Victor looked at the dirty snow in the streets of the camp.

THE front rows on the right swayed. Reval had been expecting it for the past hour. He knew everything would be decided in the next few moments. He saw Roch-

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towski and Serge go by. Then the attack came. The little gang of Russians and Poles charged the ranks like a battering-ram. . . . Curses . . . Cries . . . Protests . . . The Russians and the Poles were hitting hard. They had three huge Ukrainians who worked in the kitchen on their side. Bodies fell, were shoved back, trampled. The lines were ripped apart as the Russians and Poles surged to the front, pushing back the rest. Ravel braced himself against the shock. The ranks squeezed together like an accordion as those who had been pushed out clawed to get back in again. They had to do it quickly before the Kapos arrived. The men were pressed tightly against each other, each grasping the next one's shoulder or waist with one hand and with the other striking out savagely at those who had been pushed out of line by the Russians' charge and were now trying to squeeze in again. Reval bit his lips; a hand grabbed his collar and yanked him violently; desperately trying to keep his feet, he struck out blindly; the hand tore at his ear; he wanted to howl. Suddenly, a group fell back and then shot forward like a waterspout in an effort to plow its way into the middle of the column. The fingers opened, and his ear was free. He heard cries on the left, but he was wedged in too tightly to turn. Just as Stelmach came up, swearing, Reval caught sight of Serge—three feet outside the ranks. Stelmach saw him too, and flung himself upon him. Serge tried desperately to force his way into line but was repulsed. He recoiled and butted again. Swearing, the men ejected him. Stelmach's club caught him on the shoulder, a staggering blow. That was the end. Serge would be in the ranks of the late-comers today, for sure.

Silence fell on the column, a heavy oppressive silence.

"ZU FUNF! ZU FUNF! AUFGEHEN!" (*By fives! Break ranks!*)

"AUSRICHTEN!" (*Dress ranks!*)

Reval looked at his neighbors with a sharp anguish. On the right was a thick-set red-faced Pole. He himself looked like a sick man beside him. He stepped back instinctively, and behind him someone growled. No, it was impossible to slip back into the second or third row. He cast a worried glance to the left. A Greek. He knew him. He wasn't fat and he wasn't thin; he looked strong. Reval calulated his chances glumly. If they picked a hundred men today, as usual, he had a fairly good chance of escape. But his fear was like an iron weight in his chest. He could hardly breathe.

"MUTZEN AB!" (*Caps off!*)

It was like this every Sunday. The fifth one for Reval. The S.S. man was beginning to take the men from the left regularly; the ones who got in line last. Everybody knew it. Reval lined up long before the hour, but he lived in fear of that onset of Russians and Poles. It came every Sunday. He forced himself to stand motionless. The S.S. was counting. He counted by tens, laying his cane on every tenth man's shoulder.

"MUTZEN AUF!" (*Caps on!*).

The S.S. was going toward the left to start selecting. He was wearing a dark trench-coat with large lapels, and his boots glistened. He paused to speak to Stalmach, who opened his book.

Reval stubbornly refused to look. The operation had begun. He knew it. He wanted to look, to count how many men had already been taken, but something inside him said that if he turned his head, the S.S. would see his anxiety and choose him.

The steps came nearer. Stelmach wrote down the numbers in his book and hauled the men out of the ranks. A shudder ran through Reval's body. He was sure that his fear shone in his face. He made an effort not to scream. Blue, indifferent eyes. The S.S. had passed. He thought he was going to faint. Everything was spinning about him. Above all, not that. He made a terrible effort to breathe and felt, suddenly, very tired. Only then did he notice the gap at his left. The Greek had been taken. Reval looked. His face white, Serge was standing among those selected.

The Dotkins-Hessel-Pool Affair

Translator's Note: The following account by David Rousset appeared in the March, 1946, issue of "Les Temps Modernes." It is a case history which illustrates the ethical and practical questions discussed, above, by Nicolas and Victor.

ON August 17, 1944, Block 17 of Buchenwald received 37 officers and secret agents—French, English, Belgian, and Canadian—who had been hastily evacuated from Fresnes before the Allied advance. We learned that they were *Politzhaftlinge* and not *Schutzhaftlinge,* which meant they were in a tough spot. Alfred Balachowski got in touch with them. They thought they were going to be executed, but were not sure.

On September 8, 16 of them were sent to the Tower after evening roll call. They disappeared. . . . Various rumors got about, but it finally was established that they had all been hung the following day in the cellar of the crematorium. . . . It was not possible to save all the remaining ones. The French *concentrationnaires* who held posts of power in Block 50—the Laboratory Institute—decided, with Kogon's approval, to save three. They selected one: Dotkins (Colonel Yeo Thomas), whose rank was highest and whom they asked to pick the other two.

Their first plan was to get the three into the Infirmary, where they would officially die, an already dead prisoner being substituted for them. The Infirmary was a particularly convenient solution, since there were always many new corpses, and the substitution could be done quickly and easily. The French doctor, Vic Dupont, had a high post there—head of the T.B. ward—but in so serious an affair, he could not act by himself but had to consult the Kapo, Ernest Busse, and his aide, Otto Kipp, both members of the camp's German communist fraction. They were contacted through Karl, the Kapo of the canteen. The German fraction refused to intervene.

This refusal was based on the objective situation. It was only a few days after the bombing of Buchenwald, and considerable quantities of arms had disappeared. The S.S. was digging everywhere, and we had learned that the Tower had been collecting prisoners' clothing and had sent spies into the camp. It would have thus been risky to

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have tried to save the foreign officers. If the German communist fraction had been compromised in such a serious matter, it was almost certain that the S.S. would institute a coup d'etat and replaced the Reds (politicals) by the Greens (criminals) in all important posts. Thus the question of power was sharply posed: the return to power of the Greens would have meant thousands of deaths and a savage rule of terror throughout the camp. So the German communists declined to act.

The Infirmary being out of the question, there remained only Block 46, the "guinea-pig" block. This posed two problems: Ding-Schuler and Dietzsch. *Sturmbannfuhrer* Erwin Ding-Schuler had founded Block 50—the Laboratory Institute of the Waffen S.S.—in September, 1943, and also ran Block 46. S.S. man Ding had let it get about that he no longer believed in a German victory and would be willing to play the prisoners' game. Ding could be approached only through his secretary, Kogon, an Austrian Catholic centrist, who thanks to his position knew all the secrets of the camp. Balachowski therefore broached the plan to Kogon. After negotiations, Ding agreed on two conditions: (1) a guarantee of personal immunity after the Allied victory; (2) that Dietzsch, the Kapo of 46, not be informed of his participation. To fulfill the first, documents were prepared acknowledging Ding's services and a code message was sent to the Allies. (Balachowski and his friends had a network through which such message could be transmitted.)

Dietzsch was a more difficult proposition. Dietzsch was a real power in camp: he was the S.S.'s executioner. Everybody hated and feared him, but he had done favors for all factions. He had been a prisoner for 25 years. In 1920, he had been arrested and sentenced to 15 years for giving police documents to the Communist Party; the Nazis had simply kept him on in their camps. The difficulty was that Dietzsch detested Kogon. But Balachowski, who had been present at the party in Block 46 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dietzsch's imprisonment, luckily remembered that Hans Baumeister, a social-democrat and Kogon's aide, was on excellent terms with the Kapo. Balachowski enlisted his help. Dietzsch at first refused: he could not see anything much in it for him. Finally—after they had also enlisted the influence of his girl friend, attached to the Infirmary—Dietzsch agreed, insisting on documents attesting to his services. Dotkins and the two other officers he had selected—Hessel and Pool—were taken into Block 46.

On September 14, the remaining 18 officers were assigned to various Blocks throughout the camp. . . . On October 5, 12 of them were taken to the crematorium cellar where they were terribly beaten and then shot. . . . Two—Avallad and Evesque—were sent in transport to Jena, where they were shot on arrival. . . . Four were supposed to be helped escape by Karl, the canteen Kapo, on October 13. But when one of them, Rambaud, was called to the Tower the preceding day and shot, together with five Russian officers, Karl lost his nerve and refused to act.

As for the three in Block 46, a formal order came from Berlin for them to be sent there at once. The reply was that Pool was too ill to be moved. When a Gestapo man, accompanied by the *Obersharfuhrer* of the Infirmary, arrived at Block 46 to investigate, Dietzsch refused at first to let them in. After long negotiations, the prisoner Kapo permitted the Gestapo to enter "his" Block and to verify that Pool indeed had a very high fever (induced by an injection of lactoserum previously administered by Dietzsch). The next day—October 7—Berlin ordered Pool's immediate execution. He was theoretically killed by an injection the following day; actually, a corpse was substituted. The next day, Dotkins and Hessel also died in theory. Dietzsch had kept his word. . . .

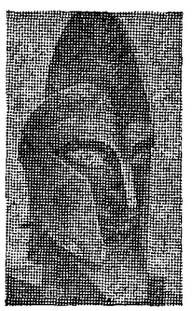
A few generalizations suggest themselves:

(1) The condition of effective action in the camps was a post of power. Alfred Balachowski could save Dotkins, Hessel and Pool only because he had a high position in the Laboratory Institute. When he first reached Buchenwald in January, 1944, he was sent on to Dora as a common worker. He was recalled through the intervention of Ding, who had learned that he had been laboratory head at the Pasteur Institute. His wide command of languages as well as his technical skill made him a power in camp. He could supply good typhoid vaccine, a currency of great value. At the same time, in accordance with the special psychology of the K-Z aristocracy, he was also powerful because he could *give* typhoid. This question of power was thus of capital importance—almost, one might say, the *only* important question. As the attitude of the communists in the affair showed, the answers to all other questions depended on the answer to that one. . . .

(2) A choice of evils always had to be made. The basic law of K-Z society was that every one could not be saved. The majority had to die. . . . Selection implies a criterion, and here ideas, interests, sympathies came into play The question of power was closely connected with that of selection of those to be saved, whence all the struggles and dramas of K-Z society.

(3) The affair gives us a glimpse, through the maneuvers of Balachowski and Kogon and the reactions of Dietzsch, into the complexity of the relationship between the S.S. and the *concentrationnaires*.

The night of April 5, 1945, *Sturmbannfuhrer* Ding drove from Weimar to Buchenwald to warn Kogon that 47 prisoners were to be executed the next morning, and that the list included Kogon, Dietzsch, and many other leaders of Block 46 and 50. All were able to conceal themselves about the camp. Ding took Kogon to Weimar in his own car, concealed in a trunk specially made for the purpose. Later on, Ding was arrested by the Americans. According to the agreement, he was not put on trial but was simply sent to a prisoner-of-war camp. He recently committed suicide. As for Dietzsch who, according to those in close contact with him, had killed with his own hand over ten thousand Buchenwald prisoners, he lives today in Germany, a free man.



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The Petiot Case

by Albert Palle

IT was never clear from Petiot's antics at the trial just what kind of a man he was.* Meeting his burning look as he bellowed invective at some witness, one found it possible to believe him first and foremost a maniac. But when his innumerable valises were stacked up in the Court of Assizes, one was convinced, rather, that he was a garden variety of degenerate. But, again, when some of the witnesses recalled Petiot's attitude before his German jailers, it was irresistibly borne in on one that some of the acts for which he had been reproached might well find their motivation in a very genuine patriotism.

In its search for plausible explanations, popular consciousness has floundered this way and that in the labyrinth of fact. As was to be expected, these explanations have turned out to be either too simple or too flattering. But their very falsity is suggestive. It is by exploring them that we are enabled to shed some light on this case.

Faithful to its fondness for magical analogies, popular consciousness groped at the very outset to establish a parallel between Landru and Petiot. But between Landru and Petiot the difference is fundamental.

Landru's victims were exclusively women, his notorious "fiancées." His life was confined to his suburban home, to his office, where he was a model employee, and to his amorous questing. Thus, about the figure of this strange spade-bearded seducer hovers the image of an absolutely private life, in the midst of which he could nourish his sentimental and sanguinary dreams, with no interference from society at large. Since the Landru Affair had taken place after the World War I, a conflict which had mobilized all the social energies of the nation, it could even be interpreted as marking the return to peace. It was a sign that organized society was relaxing its claims, thereby restoring men to their private dreams and tensions.

On the other hand, Petiot's victims, the people with whom he had to do, appear as the representative types of an era: the Policeman, the German, the Jew, the Black Marketeer . . . , etc. Petiot was so much a product of the Occupation, and his crimes seem so much bound up with the peculiarities of that period, that one is tempted to explain them in terms of the period rather than of their perpetrator.

The Petiot Case transcends the personality of Petiot. Whereas Landru was of his period only to the degree that it allowed him to stand apart from it, and the Landru Case finds its outermost limits in the person of Landru himself, the Petiot Case seems, on the other hand, not the vindication of private tensions against public concerns, but a pathologic manifestation of the latter.

It is impossible, consequently, to stop with explanations of a psychological nature. Petiot is not simply a maniac. As insensate as his behavior may have occasionally appeared in the course of the Trial, his life history does not reveal evidences of mental derangement sufficient to warrant it as the principal explanation. Money plays no part in his motives. Petiot never seemed so much at ease as when the prosecution taxed him with being a monster of cupidity. He revels to the point of tears in the image painted of him by a numerous parade of witnesses who have represented him as a charitable and disinterested physician. Beyond that, he is well-to-do, and so is his wife. Many of the victims attributed to him were poor; in any case, he stood to gain nothing by murdering them. Though some of Petiot's crimes bear the mark of acquisitive appetite, they can, by and large, no more be sufficiently explained on the grounds of cupidity than of lunacy.

Although Petiot is openly contemptuous of every imputation of cupidity or lunacy, he flies into violent rages whenever the Prosecution waxes ironical over his Resistance activities. His rages are not merely an expression of the fear experienced by an accused man whose defense strategy is under attack. Undoubtedly, it also reflects the alarm of a man the moral ground of whose acts is being called into question. Thus do we come to the heart of the matter. Petiot has in fact attempted to justify the murders he has committed by alleging that his victims were either traitors or agents of the Gestapo.

It is an established fact that a number of his victims were indeed Gestapo agents and that others may well have been. For having put them out of the way, Petiot was jailed and tortured by the Gestapo. According to declarations made by unimpeachable witnesses, he displayed remarkable courage and dignity under trying circumstances. Moreover, there is not a scintilla of evidence to point to his having been a double agent. All the testimony is consistent on this general point. Petiot never failed in his words and acts to make clear his hatred for the invaders. We are indeed obliged to consider him in some sense a member of the Resistance. If it is clearly impossible to consider him a bona fide "Resistant," we are yet compelled to see in him what must at the very least be called a "Pseudo-Resistant." To be sure, the popular mind could in no way entertain an interpretation of this kind, which might so easily reflect discredit upon certain of its ideals, notably the Resistance ideal. Sensing this, it turned to myth-making. By analyzing the myth it has created, we shall rediscover the interpretation that an exposition of the facts suggests.

During the Occupation, thousands of persons disappeared without leaving a trace. For society, that constituted an abomination of which it had some day or other to wash itself clean. Petiot has furnished society with an opportunity for its self-lustration. It has become tempting to burden him with all the unexplained crimes and absurdities of an era.

A certain aspect of the Case favored the birth of this myth. It is undoubtedly the first time in the annals of crime that an accused person has been known to admit to as many as nineteen out of twenty-nine murders imputed to him—and, moreover, has claimed responsibility for a host of others, forty-four in number, thus making sixty-three in all. On top of that, to judge from a deposition

* *Translator's Note*: In October, 1944, neighbors of Dr. Petiot, No. 21 Rue Le Sueur, in the fashionable Bois de Boulogne district, noticed what seemed to be the odor of buring flesh. There had been complaints about No. 21 before. The police broke into Dr. Petiot's elegantly furnished home and found it cluttered up with mangled corpses, skeletons, charred human bones. The furnace was stuffed with smoldering human flesh and hair. In the garage there was a lime pit filled with bodies not yet quite eaten away. The Prosecution found enough evidence to charge him with the murder of 29 people, although Petiot calmly insisted he had done away with 63. His defense, as Palle's essay brings out, was that they were Germans or Gestapo agents; he pictured himself as head of a Resistance movement called Operation Fly-Tox. The prosecution claimed that he had acted out of purely personal motives of plunder. The trial ended in March 1946, with Petiot's conviction. He was sentenced to death and executed.

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made by the coroner, Dr. Paul, who compared the dismembered bodies of Rue Lesueur with those unearthed in Paris in 1942-43, one would have every right to suppose that Petiot is responsible for a number of murders even greater than those he has confessed to. *"On meure beaucoup autour de Petiot,"* a policeman was heard to remark on the stand. One has the feeling that for this policeman, haunted by all the crimes of undetermined origin, all the unpunished assassins, all the disappearances, and all the senseless absurdities of that period, Petiot has been magnified into the Cause, the Perpetrator, the Assassin, upon whom Society, so long powerless to act, may now finally wreak its vengeance.

Against this gathering myth, Petiot struggled bitterly as he felt it closing in on him. "More than 60,000 people disappeared in France during the Occupation," Petiot said to the Court. "Surely you don't maintain that it was I who made away with them!" But his protests are in vain. Between the social peculiarities of the Occupation and the circumstances clinging to his acts existed too perfect a conjunction for a kind of commutability between his crimes and those of his period not to be established.

But the matter becomes truly complicated when Petiot struggles to associate his crimes, not with the more monstrous, but with the more heroic aspects of his time. He has proclaimed himself a part of the Resistance. Not only has he refused to accept the rôle of scapegoat laden with all the maledictions of his time, but indeed he has had the audacity to identify himself with all its grandeur. The severer the accusations against him, the greater his self-glorification. Will Prosecution and Public have him even a greater murderer? Very well, so much the greater hero he, we are given to understand. The scandal of it could not be more intolerable, and it is at this point that the myth has taken a new twist, according to which Petiot must become blacker than deepest Hell. His soul must not be allowed the least respectable cranny where a lodging might be found for the will to resist, which must belong only to the purest heroes. But it is always a difficult matter to convert a man into a devil. The facts are always there to restore him straightway to his human proportions. Popular consciousness has not been able completely to ignore the human reality of Petiot, however unbearable the rage inspired by its failure to strip him of it. The violence shown by the press, its want of objectivity, its partiality toward the Prosecutor, its helpless rage when forced to contemplate the insufficiency of the State's case, these are all very significant. Its reactions manifest the uneasiness it feels when constrained to recognize in Petiot a criminal of exceptional quality.

When confronted by an ordinary criminal, society is swift to wrath, but equally swift to be placated. It may rage because the criminal has given in to the murderous impulses it recognizes within itself and which it is concerned to guard itself against; but at the same time, it restores him to peace of mind by unburdening him, in some sense, of his evil passions. With common criminals there is no equivocal situation—crime is crime. And as far as collaborationists are concerned, the matter remains relatively simple. After having been compelled to collaborate by its will to survive, society purges and avenges itself by claiming the heads of those who had exercised the functions of collaboration. Here again it rejects a relatively shameful part of itself into outer darkness. With Petiot, the case is altered. He is neither a common criminal nor a collaborationist; and he may lay claim to having been a member of the Resistance. The uneasiness of society becomes thereby explicable. As viewed through his person, crime and patriotism become dangerously indistinguishable.

Now, one of the characteristics of the Resistance was that it fostered crime as well as heroic action and occasionally confused them. Implicit in the Petiot myth, one may perceive, magnified and distorted, certain noteworthy aspects of the Resistance. Petiot is the traitor who could not be more horrible of a story whose hero, the man of Resistance, could not be more admirable. But neither the one nor the other is as pure or as unmixed as one could wish. The traitor is sometimes marked by heroism, the hero by the nihilism of the period out of which they have both emerged. There are times when they resemble each other as much as they do the likeness of their age—an age in which the destruction of a society finds its consummation.

The Armistice and the Occupation had quickened the circulation of toxic agents in the bloodstream of French society. If France had given in to her vanquishers, she would have perished essentially. She was able to rally her energies instead. But there the tragedy began: in defending herself, she also risked self-destruction. The necessary consequences of the Resistance entailed not only the destruction of a specific social order, that of the Germans or of Vichy, but of all social order.

However necessary it was, the Resistance was inevitably more destructive than revolutionary action in the positive sense. And yet a revolution itself is destructive twice over, for it not only strives to destroy the social order it has condemned, but also endangers the one it is sworn to create. To such a point that a society born of a revolution long bears the marks of its origins and cannot come to rest until it has eliminated the destructive energies to which it owes its birth. It succeeds in this only to the degree that it is animated by a strong, positive will. Now, the Resistance was not essentially revolutionary. It was above all the will to destroy the German order and its surrogate, Vichy. As for what was to follow, that could all be settled later. Amidst the inner uncertainty of the Resistance, the forces of destruction were the stronger: human life was no longer sacred, and respect for the law was tantamount to crime.

Through the underground period, if the nobler elements resorted only with reluctance to the rigors of illegal action, there were others who took to them with greater alacrity, who killed in cold blood, looted with no regard to public susceptibilities, and found their inner justification in the general end pursued or simply in whatever catchwords came to hand. Such a state of affairs was bound to favor all sorts of aberrations. What a crime was according to the assumptions of a rejected social order, i.e., Vichy or Germany, or, for that matter, what a crime was according to the ethos of the underground, was separated from legitimate executions or operations by what was necessarily the faintest of boundary lines. Hence, the swarms of "Pseudo-Resistants," Pseudo-Partisans, and double agents. And one of the difficulties of the Authentic Resistance elements was that of establishing such a separation. Finally, what most legitimized various acts of the Resistance was undoubtedly the relevance lent them by some recognized organization: a party, London, etc. When Petiot asked the Judge: "Is it or is it not an act of Resistance to kill a member of the Gestapo?," the Judge replied: "You did not kill him as such, but as a victim to be despoiled. The proof of it is that you acted on your own responsibility." This answer shows clearly that it was not any act as such which was held against Petiot, but the circumstances that surrounded it and the intentions that lay behind it. *It is*

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mainly because Petiot's acts were those of an isolated individual that they appear suspect.

They are so in another sense because insanity was probably bound up with them; because the struggle against the enemy became one of the elements of a dream of absolute independence and non-conformism; and because that struggle masked a terrible game which could only be played out by satisfying one's murderous instincts and suppressing whoever stood in the way. But it remains not the less true that Petiot's murders are deeply rooted in the pathological deeps of a society obliged to encourage assassination and pillage and, consequently, in the name of survival, to sap the very ground of its existence.

That is why not only Petiot's position but that of authentic *Resistants* and of most of the collaborationists has often appeared in so ambiguous a light. In a certain sense, within the purview of a society at peace, all were more or less criminal, all defended their country more or less. Collaborationists had often been or become members of the Resistance. It was a rare occasion when they could not plead, by way of extenuation, some service rendered to the Resistance. On the other hand, many a *Resistant* has been haled before a tribunal as an accused collaborationist or even as a criminal. Whenever confronted by one or the other of these elements, Justice has been hard put to it to recognize its own image, and more often than not can only stammer uneasily in their presence. The truth of the matter is that both sides fought to destroy a social order: collaborationist, in order to replace it by that of the winners of the day; the *Resistant,* in order either to prepare a society of the future or to restore the principles of a society already defunct.

Petiot insinuated himself into this seesaw of destruction at that imprecise zone where crime bordered on resistance, where resistance verged on crime. That is why we have called him a "Pseudo-Resistant." Having confused duty and crime, and violated every frontier, he is indeed the representative 20th century criminal under consideration: unmeasured to the point of lunacy, destitute of individuality, a living testimony to a society which, marked by nihilism, is powerless to generate anything but death.

(*Translated by Felix Giovanelli*)

Materialism and Revolution

by Jean-Paul Sartre

1. The Revolutionary Myth

THE young people of today are ill at ease. They no longer feel that they have a right to be young; they behave as if youth were not a time of life, but a class phenomenon, an unduly prolonged childhood, a postponement of responsibility for sons of the bourgeoisie; while the workers pass without transition from adolescence to maturity. It would seem that our age, which is liquidating the European bourgeoisie, were also liquidating that abstract and metaphysical period of life which, we have always been told, "must have its fling." Ashamed of their youth and of that freedom from attachments which used to be fashionable, most of my former students married early; they were fathers of families before completing their studies. Each month they receive a check from their parents, but that does not suffice; they have to give lessons and do translations. They are semi-workers, somewhere between the kept woman and the self-employed artisan. They no longer take the time, as we did at their age, to play with ideas before adopting one. They are citizens and fathers, they vote, they feel the need to take a stand. In this there is surely no harm; after all, it is only fitting that they choose from the very first: for or against humanity, for or against the masses. But if they commit themselves to humanity and the masses, they find themselves in difficulties, for they are then told that they must get rid of their subjectivity. But if they consider this course, it is for reasons that remain subjective; it is *themselves* they consult before taking the plunge, and the more seriously they think of abandoning their subjectivity, the more important it becomes to them; and they note with irritation that their conception of objectivity is still subjective. Thus they vacillate and are unable to decide; and when they do decide, it is from impatience or weariness; they fling themselves forward with their eyes closed. But that is not the end of it: for next they are asked to choose between materialism and idealism; they are told that there is nothing in between and that if they do not take the one, it will have to be the other. But to most of them the principles of materialism seem false: they cannot understand how matter could engender the *idea* of matter. At the same time they insist on their complete rejection of idealism; they recognize that this philosophy functions as a myth in the hands of the ruling class, that it is not a rigorous view of reality but one vague enough to mask the real facts or submerge them in the idea. It makes no difference, they are told; since you are not materialists, you will be idealists in spite of yourselves, and if you are repelled by the stale devices of the academicians, you will only fall victim to an even more subtle and even more dangerous illusion.

Thus they are pursued, even in their thoughts, condemned to serve, despite themselves and in their innermost being, a philosophy they detest, or to adopt, out of a sense of duty, a doctrine in which they cannot believe. They have lost the carefree spirit appropriate to their years, without having acquired the certitude of maturity; they are no longer unattached, and yet they are unable to commit themselves; they stand on the threshold of communism without daring to cross it or turn back. They are

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not to blame: it is not their fault that today the very people who invoke dialectics, try to force them to choose between two alternatives, rejecting as a cowardly compromise the synthesis which would embrace both. Since they are profoundly sincere, since they long for the coming of a socialist order, since they are ready to serve the revolution with all their strength, the only way to help them is to inquire with them whether materialism and the myth of objectivity are really necessary to the cause of the revolution, and whether there is not a split between the action of the revolutionary and his ideology. This leads me to reconsider and reexamine materialism.

IT seems that its first step is to deny the existence of God and a transcendent aim. Its second is to explain the movements of mind by those of matter. Its third to eliminate subjectivity by reducing the world, and man with it, to a system of objects linked to one another by universal relations. From this I have a right to conclude that it is a metaphysical doctrine and that the materialists are metaphysicians. But here they stop me: I am all wrong; they detest nothing so much as metaphysics; it is not even sure that they approve of philosophy. Dialectical materialism, according to M. Naville, is "the expression of a progressive discovery of the interractions of the world, a discovery that is not at all passive, but implies militant activity on the part of the discoverer." According to M. Garaudy, the first step of materialism is to deny that there is any legitimate knowledge other than scientific knowledge. And for Mme. Angrand, one can be a materialist only if one rejects all *a priori* speculation.

These invectives against metaphysics are old acquaintances: we know them from the writings of the positivists of the last century. But they, being more logical, refused to commit themselves about the existence of God, because they regarded any conjecture on this subject as unverifiable; they had, once and for all, renounced speculating about the relations between the mind and the body, because they thought that these things defy knowledge. As a matter of fact, it is clear that the atheism of M. Naville or Mme. Angrand is not "the expression of a progressive discovery." It is a definite *a priori* statement concerning a problem which is far beyond our experience. The position implied in this statement is also my own, but in rejecting the existence of God, I did not consider myself any less a metaphysician than Leibnitz in affirming it. And by what miracle is the materialist, who accuses the idealist of metaphysics in reducing matter to spirit, enabled to reduce spirit to matter without recourse to metaphysics? Experience does not favor his doctrine—or the contrary doctrine for that matter: it merely discloses the close connection between the physiological and the psychic; and this connection can be interpreted in a thousand different ways. When the materialist claims to be *certain* of his principles, his assurance can come only through *a priori* intuition and reasoning, in other words, through those very speculations which he condemns. I now understand that materialism is a metaphysics disguised as positivism; but it is a metaphysics that destroys itself, for, by undermining metaphysics as a matter of principle, it deprives its own statements of all foundation.

At the same time it destroys the positivism in which it cloaks itself. It was from modesty that the disciples of Comte reduced human knowledge to scientific data alone: they restricted reason to the narrow limits of our experience, because it is there alone that it proves efficacious. The success of science was for them a fact; but it was a *human* fact: from the point of view of man and for man, it is true that science has been successful. They were careful not to ask whether the universe *in itself* supports and guarantees scientific rationalism, for the good reason that in order to compare the universe as it *is* to the scientific picture of it, they would have been obliged to step out of themselves and humanity, and to assume the attitude of God toward man and the world. The materialist, however, is not so timid: he steps out of science and subjectivity, he departs from the human and puts himself in the position of the God he denies, to contemplate the spectacle of the universe. He calmly writes: "The materialist conception of the world simply signifies the conception of nature as it is, without any foreign addition." (Engels: "Ludwig Feuerbach"). This surprising text speaks of eliminating human subjectivity, that "addition foreign to nature." By denying his subjectivity, the materialist thinks he has put an end to it. But the trick is easily detected. *In order to* eliminate subjectivity, the materialist declares himself to be an *object,* that is, the material of science. But once he has eliminated subjectivity for the benefit of the object, instead of seeing himself among things, buffeted by the storms of the physical universe, he turns himself into an *objective eye* and claims to contemplate nature as it is absolutely. We have to do with a pun on objectivity, which sometimes means the passive quality of the object contemplated and sometimes the absolute value of a vision divested of subjective weaknesses. Thus the materialist, having outgrown all subjectivity and assimilated himself to pure objective truth, undertakes an excursion into an objective world inhabited by human objects. And on his return, he tells us what he has learned: "Everything that is rational is real; everything that is real is rational." Whence does he derive this rationalistic optimism? We understand that a Kantian should make statements on nature, since, in his view, reason constitutes experience. But the materialist does not allow the world to be a product of our organizing activity: on the contrary, he believes us to be the product of the universe. How then are we to know that the real is rational since we did not create it, and since from one moment to the next we reflect only an infinitesimal part of it? The success of science can, at most, lead us to believe that this rationality is *probable;* but here we might be dealing with a local, statistical reality; perhaps it is valid for certain magnitudes, breaking down above or below certain limits. Materialism makes a certitude, one might even say, a postulate, of what seems to us a bold induction. For materialism there is no doubt: Reason is in man and outside of man. And the leading organ of materialism calmly calls itself *"La Pensée,* organ of modern rationalism. . . . " The only trouble is that by a dialectical reversal which might

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have been foreseen, materialistic rationalism "passes" into irrationalism and destroys itself: if the psychic fact is rigorously conditioned by the biological, and the biological fact, in turn, by the physical state of the world, it becomes clear to me that the human consciousness may express the universe in the manner of an effect expressing its cause, but not of a thought expressing its object. Can a captive reason, governed from without, manoeuvred by chains of blind causality, still be called reason. How shall I believe in the principles arising from my deductions, if outside contingency has merely deposited them in my mind? By what strange chance will the crude product of circumstance be at the same time the key to Nature? What does Lenin say of our consciousness? "It is," he says, "merely the reflection of being, in the best of cases a fairly exact reflection." But who is to decide whether the present case, materialism, is "the best of cases." One would have to be inside and outside at once to make a comparison. And according to our own assertion, this is impossible, we have no criterion for judging the validity of the reflection, except for internal and subjective criteria: its agreement with other reflections, its clarity, its distinctness, its permanence. In short, idealist criteria. And even so, they will determine only a truth *for man,* and this truth, since it is not constructed like that put forward by the Kantians, but endured, will never be anything more than a faith without foundation and a habit. Dogmatic in affirming that the universe produces thought, materialism passes at once into idealist scepticism. With one hand it posits the inalienable rights of reason, and with the other it takes them away. It destroys positivism by a dogmatic rationalism, it destroys both of these by the metaphysical assertion that man is a material object, and it destroys this last assertion by the radical negation of all metaphysics. It opposes science to metaphysics and, without realizing it, opposes *a* metaphysic to science. Nothing remains but ruins. How then shall I be a materialist?

THE answer will be that I have understood nothing, that I have confused the naive materialism of Helvetius and Holbach with *dialectical* materialism. There is, I shall be told, a dialectical movement within nature, whereby contraries in opposing one another are suddenly surmounted and united into a new synthesis. I recognize at once the movement proper to the Hegelian dialectic, which is entirely based on the dynamism of Ideas. I remember how, in the philosophy of Hegel, one idea provokes another, how each produces its opposite, I know that the mainspring of this immense movement is the attraction exerted by the future on the present and by the whole, even when it does not yet exist, on its parts. This is just as true of partial syntheses as of the absolute Totality which, in the last analysis, is the Spirit. Thus the principle of this Dialectic is that a whole governs its parts; that an idea tends of its own accord to complete and enrich itself; that the progress of consciousness it not in a straight line like the progress from cause to effect, but synthetic and pluridimensional, since every idea contains within itself and assimilates to itself the sum of anterior ideas; that the structure of the concept is not a simple juxtaposition of invariable elements which might, in certain cases, join with other elements to produce new combinations, but an organization the unity of which is such that its secondary structures can not be considered aside from the whole, without becoming "abstract" and losing their nature.

Where ideas are concerned, we have no difficulty in accepting this dialectic: ideas are naturally synthetic. However, it seems that Hegel put it backwards and that in reality it applies to matter. And if you ask what matter, you will be told that there is only one, and that it is the matter of which the philosophers speak. Now what characterizes this matter is its inertia. This means that it is incapable of producing anything by itself. It is a vehicle of motion and energy, and this motion and energy come to it from outside: it borrows them and returns them. The mainspring of all dialectics is the idea of totality: phenomena are never isolated; when they occur together, it is always on the higher level of a whole and they are bound to one another by internal relationships, that is to say, the presence of one modifies the other in its profoundest nature. But the universe of science is quantitative. And quantity is exactly the opposite of dialectical unity. It is only in appearance that a sum constitutes a totality. Actually the elements composing it stand only in relations of contiguity and simultaneity: they are together, and nothing more. A numerical unit is in no way influenced by the copresence of another unit; it remains inert and separate within the number to which it contributes. And it must be so, or else we could not count: for if two phenomena occur in an intimate union and reciprocally modify one another, it is impossible to decide whether we have to do with two separate terms or with a single one. Hence, since scientific matter represents, in a measure, the realization of quantity, science, by its profound concerns, its principles and its methods, is the contrary of dialectics. When it speaks of forces acting on a point in matter, its first care is to state their independence: each one acts as if it were alone. When it studies the mutual attraction of bodies, it is careful to define this attraction as a strictly external relation, i.e. to reduce it to modifications in the direction and velocity of the bodies' movements. To be sure, it may use the word "synthesis" in reference, for example, to chemical combinations. But never in the Hegelian sense: the particles which enter into combination preserve their properties; when an atom of oxygen combines with atoms of sulphur and hydrogen to form sulphuric acid, or with hydrogen alone to form water, it remains identical to itself; neither the water nor the acid is a true whole, which alters and governs its components, they are simple passive results: *states.* The entire effort of biology is to reduce supposed living syntheses to physico-chemical processes. . . . Nowhere, either in the universe or in science, do we encounter organic totalities: the instrument of the scientist is analysis, his aim is everywhere to reduce the complex to the simple, and the recomposition he then undertakes is only by way of a check, while the dialectician, in principle, regards complexes as irreducible.

In the *Anti-Dühring,* Engels claims, it is true, that "the natural sciences . . . have proved that nature, in the last

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analysis, proceeds dialectically and not metaphysically, that it does not move in an eternally identical circle which repeats itself perpetually, but that it has a real history." And he cites the example of Darwin in support of his thesis: "Darwin has struck a powerful blow at the metaphysical conception of nature by showing that the whole organic world . . . is the product of a process of development which has been going on for millions of years." But in the first place, it is clear that the notion of "natural history" is absurd: history is characterized neither by change nor by the independent action of the past; it is defined by the intentional assumption of the past by the present: the only possible history is human history. Moreover, if Darwin demonstrated that the species were derived from other species, his attempt to explain this phenomenon is of a mechanistic and not a dialectical nature. He explains individual differences by the theory of minimal variations; and each of these variations, in his eyes, is the result, not of a "process of development," but of mechanical chance: statistically speaking, it is impossible that in a group of individuals of the same species, there should not be a few superior in size, weight, strength, or some other special detail. As for the struggle for existence, it does not *produce* a new synthesis by a fusion of opposites: it has strictly negative effects, since it *eliminates* the weak once and for all. To understand this, it suffices to compare these results with the truly dialectic ideal of the class struggle: here the proletariat will *preserve* the bourgeois class, fusing it with itself to form a classless society. In the struggle for life, the strong simply do away with the weak. Finally, the chance advantage *does not* develop: it remains inert and is transmitted without change by heredity; it is a *state* and it does not transform itself through an internal dynamism to produce a higher stage of organization: another chance variation is merely added to it from outside, and the process of elimination is repeated mechanically. Are we to attribute all this to frivolity or to bad faith in Engels? To prove that nature has a history, he makes use of a scientific hypothesis expressly calculated to reduce all natural history to mechanical chains of events.

Is Engels any more serious when he speaks of physics? "In physics," he tells us, "all change is a shift from quantity to quality, from the quantity of movement—of whatsoever form—inherent in a body or communicated to the body. Thus the temperature of water has at first no effect on its liquid state; but if we increase or reduce the temperature of the water, a moment arrives in which its state of cohesion is modified and the water is transformed in the one case into steam, in the other into ice. . . . " But he is tricking us with mirrors. Actually scientific research takes no interest whatever in showing the shift from quantity to quality: it starts with perceptible quality, conceived as an illusory and subjective appearance, and finds behind it quantity, conceived as the truth of the universe. Engels naively assumes that temperature *first* manifests itself as a pure quantity. But actually it first appears as a quality: as that state of discomfort or well-being which makes us button up our overcoat or take it off. The scientist reduces this perceptible quality to a quantity by substituting for the vague information of our senses the measurement of the expansion of a liquid. The transformation of water into steam is for him an equally quantitative phenomenon or, if you prefer, it exists for him only *as* quantity. It is by pressure that he defines steam—or by a kinetic theory which reduces it to a certain quantitative state (position, velocity) of molecules. Hence we must choose: either we remain on the plane of perceptible quality: then steam is a quality, but so is temperature; we disregard science and observe the action of one quality on another. Or we consider temperature as a quantity, but then the transformation from the liquid to the gaseous state is defined scientifically as a quantitative change, i.e. by a measurable pressure on a piston or measurable relations between molecules. For the scientist quantity engenders quantity; scientific laws are quantitative formulas and science has no symbol to express quality as such. What Engels tries to pass off as a scientific process, is the mere voyage of his mind which goes from the universe of science to that of naive realism, and then back to the scientific world, only to leave it once more for the realm of pure sensation. Does this intellectual coming and going in any way resemble a dialectic process? Where in all this does he find progress? Let us suppose that the change of temperature, taken to be quantitative, produced a qualitative transformation in the water: our water has turned to steam. Then what? It will exert a certain pressure on an escape valve and will lift it; it will rise into the air, cool, and turn back to water. Where is the progress? I see in this a cycle, which is something very different. Without doubt, work has been done, the water is no longer contained in the vessel, it is outside on the grass and on the ground, in the form of dew. But in the name of what metaphysic shall we find progress in this change of place?

PERHAPS it will be argued that certain modern theories —like that of Einstein—are synthetic. In his system, to be sure, there is no longer any isolated element: each reality is defined in relation to the universe. A good deal could be said in this connection. I shall limit myself to remarking that no synthesis is involved here, for the relations that can be established between the diverse structures within a synthesis are *internal* and *qualitative,* while the relations which in the theories of Einstein permit us to define a position or a mass, remain *quantitative* and *external.* Besides, this is not the crux of the question: whether we have in mind Newton or Archimedes, Laplace or Einstein, the scientist does not study the concrete totality but the general and abstract conditions of the universe. Not one particular event which induces an intermingling of light, warmth, life within him and which is called "sun shining through the leaves on a summer's day," but light in general, heat in general, the general conditions of life. No scientist makes a point of studying *this particular* refraction through *this particular* piece of glass, which has its history and which, from a certain point of view, is the concrete synthesis of the universe; he is interested in the conditions governing refraction *in general.* Science is made up of concepts, in the Hegelian sense of the term. The

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dialectic, on the contrary, is essentially concerned with *notions*. We know that the notion, for Hegel, organizes and fuses concepts into the organic and living unity of concrete reality. The Earth, the Renaissance, Colonization in the 19th Century, Nazism, are the objects of *notions;* being, light, energy, are abstract concepts. Dialectic enrichment resides in the passage from the abstract to the concrete, i.e. from elementary concepts to notions that become increasingly rich. Thus the dialectic moves in the opposite direction from science.

"It is true," a Communist intellectual admitted to me: "Science and dialectics move in opposite directions. But that is because science expresses the bourgeois point of view, which is analytical. Our dialectic on the contrary is the very thought of the proletariat." Very well—though Soviet science does not seem to differ very much in its methods from the science of the bourgeois states—but if this is true, why do the Communists borrow from science arguments and proofs on which to base their materialism? The spirit of science is profoundly materialistic, that I am willing to believe: but then they tell us that it is analytical and bourgeois. The positions are at once reversed, and I clearly see two classes in struggle: one, the bourgeoisie, is materialistic, its method of thinking is analysis, its ideology is science—the other, the proletariat, is idealistic, its method of thinking is synthesis, its ideology is the dialectic. And since there is a struggle between the classes, the two ideologies should be incompatible. But not at all: it seems that the dialectic is the crowning achievement of science, the results of which it exploits; it seems that the bourgoisie, making use of analysis and consequently reducing the superior to the inferior, is idealistic—while the proletariat—which thinks by synthesis and is guided by the revolutionary ideal—even though it insists that a synthesis can not be reduced to its elements, is materialistic. Who can make head or tail out of all this?

Let us then return to science which, bourgeois or not, has at least shown its mettle. We know what it teaches concerning matter: a material object is animated from without, conditioned by the total state of the universe, subject to forces which always come from outside, composed of elements which combine without interpenetration and which remain foreign to it; it is exterior to itself; its most evident qualities are statistical, being merely the result of the movements of the molecules which compose it. Nature, as Hegel has so profoundly said, is exteriority. How shall we find a place in this exteriority for such a movement of absolute internalization as the dialectic? Is it not evident that by the very idea of the synthesis, life can not be reduced to matter, nor the human consciousness to life? Between modern science, the object of materialist love and faith, and the dialectic of which the materialists claim to make their instrument and their method, there is the same cleavage as we have just noted between materialist positivism and materialist metaphysics: one destroys the other. And, to be sure, they will tell you with equal aplomb first that life is only a complex chain of physico-chemical phenomena, and next that it is an irreductible moment of the natural dialectic. Or rather, abandoning good faith, they make themselves think both these things at once. . . .

Since materialism, as we have seen, is an *explicative* metaphysic (attempting to *explain* certain social phenomena by others, the psychic by the biological, the biological by physico-chemical laws) it makes a principle of causal relations. But since it regards science as the explanation of the universe, it turns to science and notes with suprise that the causal relations are not among those it is pleased to establish. Where is the cause in Joule's law, in Mariotte's law, in Archimedes' principle, or that of Carnot? Most frequently, science establishes functional relations between phenomena and chooses independent variables according to convenience. Moreover, it is strictly impossible to express the qualitative relation of causality in the language of mathematics. Most laws of physics simply take the form of functions of the type $y = f(x)$. Others establish numerical constants; others give us the phases of irreversible phenomena but without any indication that one of these phases is the *cause* of the following (can we say in karyokinesis that nuclear dissolution is the *cause* of the segmentation of the protoplasmic filament?). And so the causality of the materialists is without scientific foundation. The fact is that it owes its origin to the metaphysical principle of reducing spirit to matter and explaining the psychic by the physical. And so the materialist, disappointed that science should offer *too little* support for his causal explanations, turns to dialectics. But in the dialectic there is *too much*: the casual connection is linear and the cause remains exterior to its effect; besides, there is never anything more in the effect than in the cause; if there were, the principle of causality would offer no explanation for this residue. On the contrary, dialectic progress is through totalities: at every new stage it turns back to the sum of superseded positions and embraces them all. And the passage from one stage to another always enriches: there is always *more* in the synthesis than in the sum of the thesis and the antithesis. Thus the causality of the materialists can neither support itself on science nor suspend itself from the dialectic; it remains a vulgar practical notion, an indication of the permanent effort of materialism to bring together and join by force two methods which are mutually exclusive; it is the type of the false synthesis, and it is used in bad faith. . . .

WHAT exactly is this concept of *matter* that the dialecticians make use of? If they borrow it from science, it will be the poorest concept, which will fuse with other concepts to produce the richest concrete notion. This notion, ultimately, will embrace as one of its structures the concept of matter, but far from being explicable through it, it is this notion which will explain the concept of matter. In this case it is permissible to start with matter as the emptiest abstraction; it is also permissible to start with being, as Hegel does: the difference is not great, though Hegel's point of departure, being more abstract, is the better choice. But if we must really *invert* the Hegelian dialectic and "put it on its feet," we must admit that matter, chosen as the starting point of the dialectic movement, does not appear to the Marxists as the poorest concept but as the richest notion; it is identified with the entire universe, it is the totality of all phenomena; thoughts, life,

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individuals are only modes of it; it is, in short, the great Spinozist totality. Only, if this is the case and Marxist matter is the exact counterpart of the Hegelian spirit, we come to the paradoxical conclusion that Marx, in order to put the dialectic on its feet, took the richest notion as his starting point. And, to be sure, for Hegel, spirit is the starting point, but as a potentiality, an appeal: the dialectic is then identical with history. For the Marxists on the contrary, total matter, in action, is given first, and the dialectic, whether applied to the history of the species or the evolution of human societies, never does anything more than retrace the partial development of one of the modes of his reality. But if, precisely, the dialectic is not the very generation of the world, if it is not progressive enrichment, it is *nothing* at all. By obligingly putting the dialectic on its feet, Marx gave it the death blow. . . . How is it, you will say, that no one ever noticed this? It is because our materialists have, without good faith, constructed a slippery and contradictory concept of "matter." Sometimes it is the poorest abstraction and sometimes it is the richest concrete totality, according to their needs. They jump from one to the other, and mask one with the other. And when finally they are pinned down and can no longer escape, they declare that materialism is a method, a direction; if you pressed them a little, they would say it is a style of living. They would not be so very wrong, and I for my part would incline to call it a form of "seriousness" and flight from oneself. But if materialism is a *human attitude* with all that implies of the subjective, the contradictory and the sentimental, then no one should try to pass it off as a strict philosophy, a doctrine of objectivity. I have witnessed conversions to materialism: the convert enters into it as into a religion; I should like to define it as the subjectivity of those who are ashamed of their subjectivity. It is also, to be sure, the dissatisfaction of those who suffer in their flesh and know the realtiy of hunger, disease, manual labor and everything that can destroy a man. . . . One need not be a materialist to confront idealism with the crushing reality of the material world. We shall come back to this point. . . .

If materialism is the best instrument of action, its truth is of a pragmatic order: it is true for the working class because in their hands it is an effective weapon, and since social progress can only be brought about by the working class, materialism is truer than idealism which for a time served the interests of the rising bourgeoisie, but which today can only be a brake on the development of the material life of society. But when the proletariat will have finally absorbed the bourgeoisie and achieved the classless society, new problems will "give rise" to new ideas and social theories: materialism will have seen its day, for it is the philosophy of the working class and there will be no more working class. Taken objectively as an expression of the needs and problems of a class, materialism becomes an *opinion,* i.e. a mobilizing, transforming, organizing force, the objective reality of which is measured by its efficacy. And this opinion which calls itself a certitude embodies its own destruction for, to be true to its own principles, it must regard itself as an objective fact, a reflection of being, an object of science, yet at the same time, it destroys the science which is expected to analyze it and at least establish it as an opinion. The circle is evident and the whole system is without foundation, perpetually floating between being and nothingness. The Stalinist escapes the dilemma by faith. If he "accepts" materialism, it is because he wants to act and change the world: when one is engaged in so vast an undertaking, one hasn't time to be too difficult in the choice of principles to justify it. He believes in Marx, Lenin, Stalin, he admits the principle of authority and, finally, he preserves his blind, tranquil faith in materialism as a certitude. This conviction will affect his general attitude toward all systems of thought. If you question one of his doctrines or concrete statements a little too closely, he will tell you that he has no time to lose, that the situation is critical, that one must act first, combat the imminent peril, and work for the Revolution: later one will have leisure to question the principles—or rather they will expose themselves to questioning. But for the moment argument must be avoided as a possible source of weakness. All this is very well, but if he in his turn should pass to the offensive and criticize bourgeois thinking or some intellectual position he judges to be reactionary, he will now claim to be in possession of the truth; the same principles, which, he has just told us, there was no time to question, suddenly become the evidence; they cease to be useful opinions and become truths. The Trotzkyists, you tell him, are mistaken; but they are not, as he claims, police informers: he knows perfectly well that they are not.—On the contrary, he will reply, I know perfectly well that they are: what they really think is a matter of indifference to me; there is no such thing as subjectivity. But *objectively* they work for the bourgeoisie, they *behave* like provocateurs and informers, for it amounts to the same thing whether a man works for the police unconsciously or deliberately. You reply that is does not amount to the same thing at all and that in all *objectivity* the conduct of the Trotzkyite and of the policeman are not in the least alike. He declares that one is as noxious as the other and that both act as a brake on the progress of the working class. And if you insist, if you show him that there are several ways of impeding this progress and that they are not equivalent, even in their effects, he answers haughtily that these distinctions may exist but that they do not interest him: we are in a period of struggle, the situation is simple, the lines clearly drawn: why bother about subtleties? The Communist militant must not weigh himself down with all these nuances. This brings us back to the question of utility: and the proposition: "the Trotzkyist is an informer" oscillates perpetually between the states of useful opinion and objective truth.

Nothing indicates this ambiguity of the Marxist notion of truth more clearly, than the ambivalence of the Communist attitude toward the scientist: the Communists invoke his authority, exploit his discoveries, make his type of thought the sole valid type of knowledge; yet they never cease to distrust him. In so far as they lean on the strictly scientific notion of objectivity, they need his critical spirit, his taste for research and questioning, his lucidity which rejects the principle of authority and re-

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turns again and again to experience or rational evidence. But they distrust these same virtues in so far as they are believers, since science subjects all beliefs to questioning: if he brings his scientific qualities with him into the party, if he demands the right to examine the principles, the scientist becomes an "intellectual" and to his dangerous freedom of mind, the expression of his relative material independence, the party opposes the faith of the militant worker who, by his very situation, *needs* to believe in the directives of his leaders.

Here then is the materialism that I am asked to espouse: a monster, an elusive Proteus, illusion as vague and contradictory as it is highflown. I am asked to choose this very day, in full freedom of mind, in full lucidity, and the thing I am expected to choose freely and lucidly, with the best of my thought, is a doctrine which destroys my thinking. I know that there is no other salvation for man than the liberation of the working class: I know it *before* becoming a materialist, by a simple examination of the facts; I know that the interests of the spirit are with the proletariat: is that a reason for asking my mind, which has brought me this far, to destroy itself, for me to oblige it henceforth to renounce its criteria, to think what is contradictory, to tear itself between incompatible theses, to lose even the clear consciousness of itself, to start blindly on a vertiginous course which leads to faith? Kneel down and you will believe, said Pascal. The materialist recommendation is very similar. Now if it were only a case of myself kneeling down and if, by this sacrifice, I might assure the happiness of mankind, it would doubtless be my duty to consent. But I am actually asked to renounce the right to free criticism, evidence, and finally, the truth, for all men. I am told that all this will be given back to us later; but there is no proof: how can I be expected to believe in a promise made in the name of principles that destroy themselves? I know but one thing: that my mind is asked to abdicate this very day. Have I fallen into this unacceptable dilemma: to betray the interests of the oppressed class in the name of truth, or to betray truth to serve the proletariat?

IF I consider the materialist faith no longer in its content but in its history as a social phenomenon, I see clearly that it is neither a caprice of intellectuals nor the simple error of a philosopher. As far back as I can go, I find it bound up with the revolutionary attitude. Epicurus, the first thinker whose name is known to us, who wished to free men from their fears and their chains, the first who, within his limited sphere, wished to abolish servitude, was a materialist. The materialism of the great philosophers and the "Societés de Pensée," contributed not a little to the Revolution of 1789; finally the Communists often defend their thesis with an argument that seems singularly Catholic: "If materialism were false," they say, "how do you account for the fact that it united the working class, that it enabled us to lead it in struggle, and that during the past half-century, despite the most violent repressions, it has led us to such a succession of victories?" This argument, which is of the Church, and proves *a posteriori* by success, has a certain validity. It is certain that materialism today is the philosophy of the proletariat in the exact measure in which the proletariat is revolutionary; this austere and mendacious doctrine is the repository of the purest and most ardent hopes, this theory which radically denies the freedom of man has become the instrument of the most radical liberation. This signifies that its content is suited to "mobilizing and organizing" the revolutionary forces; and also that there is a profound relation between the *situation* of an oppressed class and the materialist *expression* of this situation. But from this we cannot conclude that materialism is a philosophy, much less *the* truth.

In so far as it permits coherent action, in so far as it expresses a concrete situation, in so far as millions of men find in it a hope and the image of their condition, materialism must indubitably embrace certain truths. . . . Materialism is incontestably *the only myth* suitable to the exigencies of the revolution; and the man of politics goes no farther: the myth is useful to him, he adopts it. However, if he he is involved in a long-term undertaking, it is not a myth he needs, but the *Truth*. . . .

II. The Philosophy of the Revolution

TO avoid all presuppositions, we shall adopt the *a posteriori* definition which a historian, A. Mathiez, gives of the revolution: according to him, a revolution occurs when a change of institutions is accompanied by a profound modification of property relations.

We shall call revolutionary the party or person within the party whose acts intentionally pave the way for such a revolution. And the first remark we must make is that the ability to become a revolutionary is not given to anyone at all. . . . It is obvious that the revolutionary is encountered only among the oppressed, but to be oppressed is not sufficient to make one want to be a revolutionary. The Jews may be counted among the oppressed— and the same is true of the ethnic minorities in certain countries— but many of them are oppressed within the bourgeois class and since they partake of the privileges of the class which oppresses them, they cannot without contradiction work toward the destruction of these privileges. In the same way, we shall not call revolutionary the colonial peoples or the American Negroes, although their interests may coincide with those of the party that is working toward the revolution: their integration in society is not complete. What the first desire is a *return* to an anterior state of affairs: they wish to *recover* their independence and cut the bonds attaching them to the colonizing society. What the American Negroes and the bourgeois Jews desire is an equality of rights which in no way implies a change of property relations: They simply want a share in the privileges of their oppressors, in other words, they desire a more complete integration.

The revolutionary is in such a situation that he can not hope to share in these privileges; it is only by the destruction of the class which oppresses him that he can obtain what he desires. Consequently this oppression is not,

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like that of the Jews or the Negroes, a secondary, so-to-speak lateral characteristic of the social system in question, but is on the contrary an integral part of it. Thus the revolutionary is at the same time a man oppressed and a key to the vault of the society which oppresses him; more precisely, it is in his role as a victim of oppression that he is indispensable to this society. That is to say, the revolutionary is among those who *work* for the dominant class.

The revolutionary is necessarily oppressed and necessarily a worker, and it is as a worker that he is oppressed. This double character of producer and victim of oppression suffices to define the situation of the revolutionary but not the revolutionary himself. The silk workers of Lyon, the workers of the June Days of 1848 were not revolutionaries but insurgents: they fought for an improvement in certain details of their life, not for a radical change. Their situation had engulfed them, they accepted it in its ensemble: they accepted the fate of wage-workers, of working on machines they did not own, they acknowledged the rights of the propertied class, they were obedient to its morality; but within a state of affairs which they had neither transcended nor recognized, they were simply demanding an increase in wages. The revolutionary, on the contrary, is defined by his *transcendence* of the situation in which he finds himself. And since he transcends it toward a situation that is radically new, he can comprehend it as a synthetic totality or, if you prefer, it comes to exist for him as a totality. It is after achieving this transcendence toward the future and from the point of view of the future that he *realizes* his present situation. It does not appear to him, as to the resigned victim of oppression, as the *a priori* and definitive structure of the universe; for him it can be nothing other than a moment in the universe, since he wants to change it. He considers it from the first from the standpoint of history, and considers himself as a historic agent. Thus from the very outset, through this projecting of himself toward the future, he escapes from the society that crushes him and turns back to it in order to understand it: he sees a human history which coincides with the destiny of man, and the change he wishes to effect is, if not its goal, at least an essential step. History seems to him progressive, since he regards the state to which he wishes to lead us as better than the one in which we are at present. At the same time, he sees human relations from the standpoint of labor, since labor is his own lot; and work, among other things, is a direct bond between man and the universe, it is man's hold on nature, and at the same time, a primordial type of relation between men. Hence it is an essential attitude of human reality which, in the unity of a single projection, both "exists" and causes to exist in their mutual dependence his relation to nature and his relation to other men. In so far as he demands his liberation *as* a worker, he is well aware that it cannot be realized by a simple integration of his person with the privileged class. Quite the contrary, what he desires is that the relations of solidarity between him and other workers, should become the type of human relations. Hence he desires the liberation of the entire oppressed class: unlike the insurrectionist who is alone, the revolutionary sees himself only in his relations of solidarity with his class.

Thus the revolutionary, since he achieves awareness of the social structure on which he depends, demands a philosophy of his situation, and since his action has a meaning only if it involves the fate of mankind, this phiolosophy must be total, i.e. it must throw a total light on the condition of mankind. And since he himself as a worker is an essential structure of society and the hinge between man and nature, he has no use for a philosophy which does not express primarily and centrally the original relation of man to the world, which is precisely the coordinated action of one upon the other. Finally, since this philosophy is born of a historic undertaking and must represent to its advocate a certain specific type of submission to the historical, it must present the course of history as oriented or at least as orientable: and since it is born of action and directed toward action which it must illuminate, it is not a contemplation of the world, but is itself necessarily an action. . . .

The need is not for forging a cosmogonic myth which will symbolically represent thought-action, but for abandoning all myths and returning to the true revolutionary exigency, which is to unite action and truth, thought and realism. In one word, a philosophical theory is required which shows that man's reality is action and that action on the universe is one with the comprehension of this universe as it is, in other words, that action is the unveiling of reality *at the same time* as the modification of this reality. But we have seen that the materialist myth is also the imaged representation, within a cosmology, of historic movement, of the relation of man to matter, of the relation of men to each other, in short of all revolutionary themes. Hence we must return to the expressions of the revolutionary attitude and examine them in detail to see if they demand nothing more than a mythical figuration or if on the contarary they demand the founding of a strict philosophy.

EVERY member of the dominant class is a man by divine right. Born into a society of leaders, he is convinced from childhood that he is born *to* command and, in a certain sense that is true, since his parents, who command, have engendered him to follow in their footsteps. There is a certain social function which awaits him in the future, into which he will slip as soon as he has come of age, and this function is something like the metaphysical reality of his person. And in his own eyes he is a person, that is, an *a priori* synthesis of fact and rights. Awaited by his peers, destined to take their place when the time comes, he exists because he *has the right* to exist. This sacred character of the bourgeois for the bourgeois, which is manifested in ceremonies of recognition (the salutation, the visiting card, the announcement, ritual calls, etc.) is what is called human dignity. The ideology of the ruling class is entirely permeated with this idea of dignity. And when it is said of men that they are "the kings of creation," we must interpret this word in its strongest sense: they are its monarchs by divine right; the world is made for them, their existence is an absolute and completely satisfying value for the mind which gives meaning to the universe. This is the original sense of all the

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philosophical systems which affirm the primacy of the subject over the object and the constitution of nature by the activity of thought. It is self-evident that under these conditions man is a supernatural being: what we call nature is the totality of what exists, yet lacks the right to exist.

For these consecrated men, the oppressed classes are a part of nature. They do not command. Perhaps in other societies, the fact of being born in the "domus" also gives the slave a sacred character: a character of being born *to* serve, of being the man of divine duty as opposed to the man of divine right. But in the case of the proletariat, the same could not be said: the worker's son, born in an out of the way slum, in the midst of the mass, has no direct contact with the propertied elite; personally he has no duties, except for those defined by law, he is not even prohibited, if he possesses that mysterious grace called merit, from rising, under certain circumstances and reservations, to the superior class: his son or his grandson will become a man by divine right. Hence, he is nothing but a living creature, the best organized of the animals. Everyone has felt the contemptuous note in the term "natural" used to designate the natives of a colonial country. The metropolitan banker, industrialist, or even professor, are not the natural people of another country: they are not natural at all. The victim of oppression, on the contrary, feels natural: every event of his life dins it in to him that he has not the right to exist. His parents did not bring him into the world for any particular end: but by accident, *for nothing;* at best because they loved children, or because they were susceptible to a certain kind of propaganda, or because they wished to enjoy the advantages accorded to large families. No special function awaits him and, if he has been placed in apprenticeship it was not to prepare him to exercise the priesthood of a profession, but solely to permit him to continue the unjustifiable existence he has been carrying on ever since he was born. He will work to live, and it is not enough to say that he will be robbed of the property produced by his labor: he will be robbed of the very meaing of his labor, since he has no sense of solidarity with the society for which he produces. Whether a mechanic or a common laborer, he knows perfectly well that he is not indispensable: interchangeability is even a characteristic of workers. The work of the doctor or lawyer is judged by quality, that of the "good" worker by quantity alone. Through the circumstances of his situation, he takes cognizance of himself as of a member of a zoological species: the human species. As long as he remains on this plane, his condition seems natural to him: he will continue his life as he began it, though he may engage in spasmodic revolts without further implication if the oppression becomes more severe.

THE revolutionary transcends this situation since he wishes to change it, and it is from the standpoint of this desire for change that he considers it. First of all, we must remark that he wants to change it for his whole class, and not for himself: if he thought only of himself, he might depart from the plane of the species and accede to the values of the ruling class; it goes without saying that he would accept *a priori* the sacred character of those who are men by divine right to the sole end of profiting from it in his turn. But since he cannot even think of claiming for *his whole class,* the origin of which is precisely an oppression which he wants to destroy, his first move will be to contest the rights of the ruling class. In his eyes, men by divine right do not exist. He has not come into contact with them, but he surmises that they lead the same existence as himself, equally vague and unjustifiable. Unlike the members of the oppressor class, he does not seek to exclude the members of the other class from the human community. But at the very outset he wishes to despoil them of that magical aspect which makes them feared by those they oppress. . . .

Quite the contrary of the renegade or the member of a persecuted minority who wishes to rise to the level of the privileged class and become assimilated to it, the revolutionary wishes to bring the privileged down to his own level by denying the validity of their privileges. And as the continuous sense of his contingency disposes him to recognize himself as an unjustifiable fact, he considers the men by divine right as simple facts like himself. Hence the revolutionary is not the man who claims rights but on the contrary the man who destroys the very notion of right, which he regards as a product of custom and force. His humanism is not founded on human dignity, on the contrary it denies man any particular dignity; the unity in which he aims to fuse all his fellowmen and himself is not a unity of the human *order,* but of the species. There is a human species, an unjustifiable and contingent phenomenon; the circumstances of its development have led it to a kind of internal disequilibrium; the task of the revolutionary is to make it regain a more rational equilibrium transcending its present state. Just as the species has enfolded and absorbed the man by divine right, nature enfolds and absorbs mankind: man is a natural phenomen, mankind a species among other species. Only in this way does the revolutionary expect to escape from the mystifications of the privileged class: the man who knows himself to be a part of nature can never again be mystified by *a priori* moral judgements. Materialism appears to offer him its aid; it is the epic of the fact. . . . Materialism offers the advantage of constituting a crude myth of the origin of the species by deriving the more complex forms of life from the simpler forms. It is not only a matter of everywhere replacing the end by the cause, but of creating a picture postcard of a world in which causes have everywhere replaced ends. From the attitude of the first and most naive of the great materialists, it is evident that materialism has always had this function: Epicurus recognizes that an indefinite number of different explanations might be just as true as materialism, that is, they might give just as true an account of phenomena; but he defies anyone to find another explanation that would liberate man more completely from his fears. And the essential fear of man, especially if he is unhappy, is not so much death or the existence of a stern God, but the notion that the state of affairs under which he suffers was brought about or is being maintained for transcendent ends of which he is unaware; hence any effort to modify it would be culpable and vain; a subtle discouragement would in-

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fect his very judgments and prevent him from desiring or even conceiving of a change. Epicurus reduced death to a fact by depriving of it of the moral aspect conferred by the fiction of subterranean tribunals; he did not abolish phantoms but he made them into strictly physical phenomena; he did not dare to abolish the gods, but he reduced them to a mere divine *species,* having no relation to us, he deprived them of the power to create themselves and showed that like us they were engendered by the flow of atoms.

But here again, is the materialist myth which was able to encourage certain men, really necessary? What the revolutionary consciousness requires is that the privileges of the oppressing class should be unjustifiable; that the original contingency which he finds in himself should also constitute the existence of his oppressors; finally, that the system of values constructed by his masters, the aim of which is to confer an element of right on a social organization which is primarily a fact, should be transcended toward a state of the world that does not yet exist. But it is apparent that he has an ambivalent attitude toward the *natural.* In one way, he plunges into nature, dragging his masters after him; but at the same time, he proclaims his intention of substituting a rational organization of human relations for the organization blindly produced by nature. The expression employed by marxism to designate the future society is *antiphysis.* This signifies their desire to introduce a human order, the laws of which will be the precise negation of natural laws. And presumably this order can be brought about by acceding at first to the ordinances of nature. But the ultimate fact is that this order, to be realized, must be conceived within a nature which negates it; the fact is that in anti-natural society the idea of the law will precede the establishment of the law, while today, according to materialism, the law conditions the idea we have of it. In a word, the passage to antiphysis signifies the replacement of the society of laws by the society of ends. And beyond a doubt, the revolutionary is suspicious of values and refuses to recognize that he is aiming at a better organization of the human community: he fears that a return to values, even by a devious route, will open the door to new mystifications. But on the other hand, the mere fact that he is willing to sacrifice his life for an order, the advent of which he never expects to see, implies that this future order, which justifies all his acts, yet which he will never enjoy, functions for him as a value. What actually is a value, if not the appeal of that which is not yet?

To take account of these diverse exigencies, a revolutionary philosophy should put aside the materialist myth and attempt to show 1) that man is unjustifiable; that his existence is contingent in that neither he himself nor any Providence has produced it; 2) consequently, that any collective order established by man can be transcended by other orders; 3) that the system of values current in a society reflects the structure of that society and tends to preserve it; 4) that consequently it can always be transcended with a view to other systems, which are not clearly perceived since the society that they will express does not yet exist, but which are anticipated and, ultimately, invented by the effort of the members of a society to transcend that society. The victim of oppression lives his original contingency, and the revolutionary philosophy must take it into account; but in living his contingency he accepts the rights underlying the existence of his oppressors and the absolute value of the ideologies they have produced. He becomes revolutionary only by a movement of transcendence which questions these rights and this ideology. The revolutionary philosophy must above all explain the possibility of this movement of transcendence: and obviously it cannot draw its resources from the purely material and natural existence of the individual, since it turns against this existence to judge it from the standpoint of the future. This possibility of *detaching* oneself from a situation in order to take a point of view concerning it (a point of view which is not pure cognition but indissolubly comprehension and action), is precisely what we call freedom. No sort of materialism will ever explain this transcendence of a situation, followed by a turning back to it. A chain of causes and effects may well impel me to an action, or an attitude, which *will* itself be an effect and will modify the state of the world: it can not cause me to turn back to my situation to apprehend it in its totality. In a word, it cannot account for revolutionary class consciousness. Doubtless the function of the materialist dialectic is to explain and justify this transcendence toward the future. But its intent is to infuse freedom into things not into man, and this is absurd. Never will a state of the world produce a consciousness of class. . . . And the Marxists are so well aware of this that they count on their militants—i.e. on a conscious and concerted action—to radicalize the masses and arouse this consciousness in them. Very well: but where do these militants themselves derive their understanding of the situation? Must they not, at some time, have detached themselves and taken a perspective? Finally, to prevent the revolutionary from being mystified by his former masters, it is necessary—as the materialist does—to show him the established values as simply given. But if they are given and hence capable of being transcended, it is not because they are values but because they are established. And to save him from mystification, it is necessary to give him the means of understanding that the aim he is pursuing—whether he calls it antiphysis, classless society, or liberation of mankind—is also a value and that, if this value is not transcendable, it is simply because it has not been realized. Marx foresaw this when he spoke of something beyond communism—and Trotzky when he spoke of permanent revolution. Revolutionary man must be a contingent being, unjustifiable but free, entirely immersed in the society that oppresses him, but capable of transcending this society by his efforts to change it. Idealism mystifies him in that it binds him by rights and values that are already given; it conceals from him his power to devise roads of his own. But materialism also mystifies him, by depriving him of his freedom. The revolutionary philosophy must be a philosophy of transcendence. . . .

ONE of the traits of idealism most repugnant to the revolutionary is the tendency to represent the changes in the world as governed by ideas or rather by changes in

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ideas. Death, unemployment, the crushing of a strike, misery and hunger are not ideas. They are everyday realities lived in all their horror. They have a meaning no doubt, but primarily they retain a core of irrational opacity. The war of 1914 was not, as Chevalier said, "Descartes vs. Kant," it was the inexpiable death of twelve million young men. The revolutionary, crushed by reality, refuses to allow reality to be spirited away. He knows that the revolution will not be a simple consummation of ideas, but that it it will cost blood, sweat, human lives. He has paid to know that things are solid and sometimes insuperable obstacles, that the best conceived project encounters resistance which often dooms it to failure. He knows that action is not a happy combination of thoughts, but the effort of a whole man against the stubborn impenetrability of the universe. After the meanings of things have been deciphered, he knows that there remains an unassimilable residue, which is the otherness, the irrationality, the opacity of the real, and that it is this residue which finally stifles and crushes. Unlike the idealist, whose cowardly thinking he denounces, he wants to be hard-headed. Better still, to the adversity of things he wants to oppose not the idea but action, which finally resolves into efforts, hardships, vigils. Here again materialism seems to offer him the most satisfactory expression of his existence since it affirms the predominance of impenetrable matter over the idea. For him everything is fact, conflict of forces, action. Thought itself becomes a real phenomenon in a measurable world; it is produced by matter and consumes energy. . . .

Let us note that too strict adherence to universal determinism may destroy all the *resistance* of reality. I had proof of this in a conversation with Mr. Garaudy and two of his comrades. I asked them if it was true that the stakes were down when Stalin signed the Russo-German pact and when the French Communists decided to participate in the de Gaulle government, if in both these cases, the responsible parties had not *assumed the risks* with a rather anguished sense of their responsibilities.

For it seems to me that one of the great characteristics of reality is that you can never be entirely sure of what it will do, and that the consequences of our acts are only probable. But M. Garaudy interrupted me: for him the game was over in advance; there is a science of history and a strict chain of events; hence one can lay one's bet with perfect certainty. His zeal carried him so far that in the end he said to me passionately: "What difference does Stalin's intelligence make? I don't give a damn about that." It must be added that under the severe looks of his comrades, he flushed, lowered his eyes and added with a pious look: "Anyway, Stalin is extremely intelligent." And so, quite unlike revolutionary realism which proclaims that the slightest result is brought about amid suffering and the worst incertitudes, the materialist myth encourages certain minds to supreme confidence regarding the outcome of their effort. It is impossible, they think, that they will not succeed. History is a science, its results are written as in a book, one need only read them. Such an attitude is obviously escapist. This revolutionary has reversed the bourgeois myths, and through a thousand adventures, humiliations and retreats, victories and setbacks, the working class, in freedom and anguish, has undertaken to forge its own destiny. But our Garaudys are afraid. What they seek in Communism is not liberation, it is a reinforcement of discipline; they fear nothing so much as freedom; and if they have renounced the *a priori* values of the class from which they issued, it is to find *a prioris* of knowledge and roads already traced in history. No risks, no worry, everything is sure, the results are guaranteed. Reality vanishes, and history is nothing more than an idea that keeps developing. . . .

We were warned to choose between materialism and idealism, informed that there is nothing in between these two doctrines. But without any preconceived idea, we have let the exigencies of revolution speak, and we have found that of their own accord they traced the outlines of an original philosophy which rejected both idealism and materialism. First of all it seemed to us that the revolutionary act was the free act par excellence. Not in an anarchist, individualist sense: in this case, indeed, the revolutionary, by his very situation, could only, more or less explicitly, demand the rights of the "refined class," that is, his integration in the higher social strata. But since remaining within the oppressed class and speaking for the entire oppressed class, he demands a more rational social statute, his freedom resides in the act by which he demands the freedom of his whole class and, more generally, of all men. It is, in its source, a recognition of other freedoms and demands to be recognized by them.

Thus, from the outset, it puts itself on the plane of solidarity. And the revolutionary act contains within itself the premises of a philosophy of freedom or, if we prefer, it creates such a philosophy by its very existence. . . . A revolutionary philosophy must take into account the plurality of freedoms and show how each of them, though an independent freedom in itself, must be capable of being an object to another. It is solely this double character of freedom and objectivity which can explain the complex notions of oppression, struggle, defeat and violence. For only a single freedom is ever oppressed, but it can be oppressed only if, in some aspect, it lends itself to oppression, that is if it presents to the other the outward aspect of a thing. Thus we shall understand the revolutionary movement and its project which is, by violence, to make society pass from a state in which the freedoms are alienated, to another founded on their mutual recognition.

SIMILARLY the revolutionary who *lives* oppression in his flesh and in every one of his acts, will not underestimate the yoke to which he has been subjected nor allow idealist criticism to dissipate it in ideas. He contests the rights of the privileged class and at the same time destroys the idea of right in general. But it would be a mistake to believe, with the materialist, that he destroys the idea of right in order to replace it by the *fact* pure and simple. For the fact can engender only the fact and not the idea of the fact; the present engenders another present, not the future. And so the revolutionary act demands that within the unity of a synthesis we transcend the opposition of materialism—which can account for the disintegration of a society but not the *construtions* of a new society—and idealism—which imbues the fact with an existence by

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right. It demands a new philosophy with a different picture of the relations of man to the world. If revolution is to be possible, man must have the contingency of a fact and yet differ from the fact by his practical power to prepare the future and, consequently to transcend the present, to detach himself from his situation. This act of detachment is itself no way comparable to the negative movement by which the Stoic attempts to take refuge in himself: it is by throwing himself forward, but committing himself to action that the revolutionary transcends the present; and since he is a man acting in a human way, we must attribute this power of detachment to *all human activity*. The slightest human act must be construed as emanating from the future; even the reactionary is oriented toward the future, since he is concerned with making a future which is identical with the past. The absolute realism of the tactician demands that man be immersed in the real, menaced by concrete dangers, that he be the victim of a concrete oppression from which he will be delivered by acts equally concrete: blood, sweat, grief, death are not ideas: the rock that crushes, the bullet that kills are not ideas. . . . Man is entirely in the grip of nature, which can crush him from one moment to the next, destroy him body and soul. To be born is for him really to "come into the world" in a situation not of his own choosing, with *this* body, *this* family, and perhaps *this* race.

But if, as Marx expressly says, he plans to "change the world," this means that he is originally a being for whom *the world* exists in its totality, as can never be true of a piece of phosphorus or lead which is a *part* of the world, traversed by forces which it endures but does not comprehend. To change the world is for him to transcend it toward a future state from which he can consider it. For it is by changing the world that one can come to know it. . . . This can be done only by a man situated in the universe, who is totally crushed by the forces of nature and who totally transcends them by his project of harnessing them. By his entire conduct, the revolutionary demands the elucidation of these new notions of "situation" and "being-in-the-world." And if he escapes from the thicket of rights and duties in which the idealist seeks to lead him astray, it must not be to fall into the defiles rigorously traced by the materialist. Doubtless intelligent Marxists admit a certain contingency in history: but only to say that if socialism fails, mankind will sink into barbarism. In a word, if the constructive forces are to triumph, they have but one road to follow: that assigned by historic determinism. But many barbarisms are possible and many socialisms, perhaps even a barbarous socialism. What the revolutionary demands is the possibility of man devising his own law. This is the foundation of his humanism and his socialism. In the bottom of his heart—at least in so far as he is not mystified—he does not think that socialism is waiting for him at the crossroads of history like a bandit at a crossroads in the woods. He thinks he is making a *fact of socialism*, and as he has shaken all rights and flung them to the ground, he accords it no other right to existence than the *fact* that the revolutionary class invents it, wills it, and will construct it. In this sense, this arduous and slow conquest of socialism is nothing other than the affirmation, in and by history, of human freedom. And precisely because man is free, the triumph of socialism is not assured at all. It is not at the road's end like a marker; it is, rather, *the* human project. It will be what men will make of it; and this accounts for the seriousness with which the revolutionary envisages his action. He feels responsible not only for the advent of some socialist republic, but for the specific nature of this socialism.

Thus revolutionary philosophy, transcending both idealist thought which is bourgeois and the materialist myth which for a time was useful to the oppressed masses, must be the philosophy of *man* in general. And this is very natural: if it is true, it will be universal. . . . But, it will be said, if it is universal, i.e. true for everyone, will this not put it beyond parties and classes? Shall we not find an apolitical, asocial, and rootless idealism? I reply that this philosophy can disclose itself only to revolutionaries, that is, to men in a *situation of oppression,* and that only through them can it be manifested to the world. At this moment, revolutionary humanism will appear, not as the philosophy of an oppressed class, but as the truth itself, humiliated, masked, oppressed by men who have an interest in evading it, and it will become manifested to all those of good will that the truth itself is revolutionary. Not the abstract Truth of idealism, but concrete Truth, desired, created, upheld, conquered through social struggles by the men who have worked toward the liberation of men.

It will be argued perhaps that this analysis of revolutionary requirements is abstract, since after all the only existing revolutionaries are marxists, who adhere to materialism. It is true that the Communist Party is the only revolutionary party. It is true that materialism is the doctrine of the party. But I have not attempted to describe what the marxists believe, but to detect the implications of what they *do*. And association with Communists has precisely taught me that nothing is more variable, abstract and subjective than what they call their marxism. . . . For the communists are caught between the obsolescence of the materialist myth and the fear of creating division, or at least hesitation, among their forces by adopting a new ideology. The best of them are silent; and this silence is filled in with the blabbering of imbeciles. "After all," the leaders think no doubt, "what difference do ideologies make? Our old materialism has proved itself and will doubtless lead us to victory. Our struggle is not a struggle of ideas; it is a political and social struggle of men against men." For the present and near future they may be right. But what manner of men will they produce? Can they, with impunity, mould generations by teaching them errors which succeed? What will happen some day if materialism stifles the revolutionary project?

(*Translated by Ralph Manheim*)

OUR OWN CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

The hearing was enlivened by the testimony of Mrs. Frank Morriss, who described herself as "just a little girl from Texas." She castigated the OPA as "unAmerican, unconstitutional and undemocratic" and urged its immediate termination. Following her testimony, Chairman Tobey leaned back and asked softly: "Tell me, pretty maiden, are there any more at home like you?" —*N. Y. Times,* Jan. 31.

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Marxism and Philosophy

by Maurice Merleau-Ponty

"To be radical is to grasp the matter by its root. Now the root for mankind is man himself." Marx —*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law.*

JUDGING from the writings of certain contemporary Marxists, one would obtain a strange idea of Marxism and its relation to philosophy. It is clear that for them philosophy is only verbal, that it has no content or significance and that, like Auguste Comte in his early period, they wish to replace it by science and reduce man to a mere object of science. . . . Everybody has the right to adopt the philosophy of his choice and, for example, scientism and mechanism have long substituted for thought in Radical-Socialist circles. But let us emphasize that this kind of ideology has nothing in common with Marxism.

In a Marxist conception, human society and, in particular, economic society cannot be subject to permanent laws such as those of classical physics, since it is seen moving toward a new order in which the laws of classical economics would no longer apply. The entire effort of Marx in *Capital* tends to show that these very laws, often presented as permanent features of "social nature," are in reality the attributes (and the masks) of a certain "social structure"—capitalism—which evolves toward its own destruction. The notion of structure or totality . . . is one of the fundamental categories of Marxism. A Marxist political economy can speak of laws only within qualitatively distinct structures which must be described in terms of history. A priori, scientism appears as a conservative concept, since it leads us to take as eternal what is only temporary. In fact, all through the history of Marxism, the worship of science appeared only when revolutionary conscience began to weaken: the celebrated Bernstein pleaded with the Marxists to adopt the objectivity of the scientist. As Lukacs remarked, scientism is only another manifestation of the alienation or the reification (Verdinglichung) which deprives man of his specific human essence and identifies him with things.[1]

There is even less reason to explain human society in its (simultaneous or successive) totality by means of "natural" permanent laws now that this approach is no longer possible for physical nature. Modern physics is far from eliminating structure; it conceives its laws only within the framework of a certain historical state of the universe which is not said to be definitive and which is affected by empirical factors that cannot be deduced. From this . . . it might appear that dialectical processes operate even in nature and, in this sense, nature and society are homogeneous. It is true that Engels took from Hegel the adventurous idea of a dialectic of nature. But, aside from being the most fragile part of the Hegelian heritage, how could a dialectic of nature survive idealism? If nature really is nature, i.e., external to us and to itself, it has neither the relations nor the qualities needed to sustain a dialectic. If it *is* dialectical, it is so because we are dealing with nature as perceived by man and inseparable from human action, of which Marx talks or writes in the *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *German Ideology*: "This activity, this sensible and continued work and action, this production are . . . the foundation of the sensible world as it exists today."[2]

It is, indeed, possible to find in Marx texts of a positivistic trend which treat certain ideologies as being absurdities and count on scientific enlightenment to dissipate them. "With these Germans," he says in the *German Ideology,* for example, "it is always a matter of resolving the existing incongruity by means of some other magic formula, and presupposing that all this absurdity ultimately has a special meaning which must be unveiled; while actually it is only a matter of explaining these theoretical phrases by real existing conditions."[3] It looks as if Marx refused to "understand" religion, to recognize its significance, and consequently rejects even the principle of the phenomenology of religion. We are now really close to an "emaciated Marxism" which reduces history to its economic skeleton. Religion literally means nothing; it is all words, it is false, it is only an illusion or a comedy. That, however, is not Marx—it is Voltaire; and Marx has elsewhere said the exact contrary: "Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritual point of honor, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its general cause for consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence, because the human essence has no true reality. . . . Religion is . . . the soul of a world without heart, and the spirit of a period without spirit."[4] The idea, therefore, is not to deny religion all significance, but to discover its human significance and to treat it as the symbolic expression of the social and human drama. Communist thought must not offer less than religion but more—religion retraced to its sources and truths: the concrete relations of men to other men and to nature. The idea is not to replace church religion by laboratory religion and substitute a recording cylinder for the Holy Sacrament, but to understand religion as the fantastic effort of men to rejoin fellow men in another world, and to replace this phantom communication by an effective communication in this world. In the days when he still based history on interhuman relations and when the spirit of the world had not yet retired behind things, the young Hegel said that reading the newspapers was "a realistic morning prayer." Men working to control nature which first dominated them, to break the established structures of society and achieve by action the "reign of freedom"[5]—or, as Hegel says, "absolute history"[6]—that is the human core of religion and, in the Heideggerian sense, the "metaphysical" content of Marxism. Religion is more than a hollow apparition—it is a phenomenon founded in interhuman relations. It will disappear as a separate religion only when it becomes part of these relations. There is a pseudo-Marxism according to which everything is false but the final phase of history. It corresponds, in the plane of ideas, to the rudimentary communism—"wish and desire for levelling"[7]—which is not dear to Marx. Authentic Marxism wants to absorb its heritage by outgrowing it; in this sense Marxism admits that everything is true in its place and rank in the total

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system of history; everything makes sense. This interpetation of history as a totality is given not by some law of the physico-mathematical type, but by the central phenomenon of alienation. In the course of history, man, alienated from himself to the profit of his fetiches and emptied of his substance, again takes possession of himself and of the world. There is no economic life, no merchandise, no fetichism of merchandise nor revolt against this fetichism, among the animals. These phenomena are possible only because man is not a thing or even an animal, because he has the privilege of relating himself to other things than his self, because he not only is, but "exists."

What accredits the legend of a Marxist positivism is the fact that Marx fights on two fronts. On the one he is against all forms of mechanistic thought. On the other, he wages battle against idealism. The "world spirit" of Hegel, this sly genie who leads unwitting men and makes them accomplish his designs, or even the spontaneous logic of ideas are for Marx but other "fantastic realizations of the human essence." But this fight against idealism has nothing to do with the positivist's objectivization of man. Marx would not even consider speaking, as Durkheim will, of a collective conscience of which individuals are mere instruments. "Above all we must avoid setting up 'Society' as an abstraction opposed to the individual. The individual is *the social being.*"[8] Man is "a being existing for himself," hence a *generic being.*[9] Society is not an accident to which he is subjected, but a dimension of his being. He is not in society as an object is in a box, but becomes part of it with his innermost self. That is why one can say that "man produces himself and the other man. . . . In the same way that society molds man, it is molded by him."[10]

If it is not a given "social nature" imposed from without, nor the "world spirit," nor the interplay of ideas, nor the collective conscience, *what is then for Marx the carrier of history and the driving force of the dialectic?* It is man engaged in a certain mode of assimilating nature from which springs the mode of his relations to others; it is the concrete human intersubjectivity, the successive and simultaneous community of lives realizing themselves in property relations to which they are subjected and which they transform, each created and creating. One has sometimes asked with reason how materialism can be dialectical, how matter, taking the world rigorously, can contain the principle of productivity and of novelty, which is how a dialectic is defined. That is because in Marxism, "matter," as elsewhere "conscience," is never considered by itself but is integral to the system of human existence where it creates the common situation of contemporaneous and successive individuals, assures the generality of their projects and makes possible a line of development and a sense of history. But once the logic of the situation is put in motion, developed and accomplished it is only through human productivity, without which the interplay of given natural conditions would not cause an economy to appear, and certainly no history of economy. Domestic animals, says Marx, are part of human life, but they are only products, they do not actually participate. Man, on the contrary, keeps on producing new modes of working and living. Hence no explanation of man can start from the animal or, indeed, from mattter. There is no origin of man: ". . . since, for the socialist, the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the production of man through human effort, that is, the appropriation of nature by man, he has thus the evident and irrefutable proof of his birth out of himself, and of his origin."[11]

If the socialist can envisage a "reign of liberty" which does not yet exist and, with this prospect, live the present as a phase of capitalist alienation, it is because he has the inner conviction that man is productive with respect to other things than himself and is not an inert thing. Shall we then define man as conscience? That would again constitute a fantastic realization of the human essence since, once defined as conscience, man would be separated from all things, from his body and from his effective existence. Consequently, he must be defined as a relation to instruments and objects, a relation which is not one of simple thought but which engages him in the world in such a manner that he has an external face and an exterior, that he be "objective" and at the same time "subjective." This can be done by defining man as a "suffering" or "sensitive"[12] being that must live within nature and society, but is also open, active, and capable of establishing his autonomy on the very territory of his dependence. "We see here that naturalism, or true humanism, differs from both idealism and materialism and is at the same time the truth which unites the two."[13] We must understand that the bond which ties man to the world is at the same time the means of his liberation, and how man in contact with nature, without destroying necessity but, on the contrary, utilizing it and projecting about himself the instruments of his liberation, constitutes a cultural atmosphere in which "the *natural* behavior of man has become *human* . . . where the human being has become his *natural* being, his *human nature* has become his *nature.*"[14] This not supernatural but transnatural milieu in which men "everyday remake their own lives"[15] is history. "History is the true natural history of man."[16] Marxism is not a philosophy of the subject, nor a philosophy of the object, it is a philosophy of history.

Marx has often called his materialism a "practical materialism."[17] He meant to say that matter intervenes in human life as the fulcrum and body of the *praxis.* It is not a question of a naked matter exterior to man and by means of which his behavior could be explained. The materialism of Marx, then, is the idea that all ideological formations of a given society are synonymous or complementary to a certain type of praxis, that is to say the manner in which this society has established its fundamental rapport with nature. It is the idea that economy and ideology are inherently connected in the totality of history as matter and form in a work of art or any perceived object. The meaning of a painting or a poem cannot be detached from the material substance of the colors and words and is neither created nor understood from the idea alone. One understands the perceived object only after having seen it, and no analysis nor any verbal description can replace this vision. Similarly, the "spirit" of a society is already implied in its mode of production because the latter already represents a certain mode of human togetherness of which the scientific, philosophical and religious conceptions are either the direct development or the fantastic counterpart. One understands consequently that it was up to Marx to introduce the notion of the *human object*[18] which phenomenology adopted and developed. The classical philosophers have dissociated this notion: the street, the field, the house were for them complexes of colours, in all points comparable to natural objects and assigned human significance only through a secondary judgment. Marx, when speaking of human objects, means that this significance is inherent in the object

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as it appears in our experience. That was carrying to its concrete consequences the Hegelian conception of a *"spirit-phenomenon"* or an *"object spirit"* mediated by the world and not withdrawn into itself. The spirit of the society is realized and transmitted and perceived by the cultural objects that society gives itself and amid which it lives. Its practical categories become sedimented in it and, in return, they suggest to men a way of living and of thinking. Thus one can understand that logic can be the "money of the mind"[19] or that thef etichism of merchandise" could induce an entire mode of "objective" thought peculiar to bourgeois civilization. As has been justly noted,[20] the oft-celebrated relation of ideology and economy remains mystical, prelogical and unthinkable so long as the ideology remains "subjective" and as the economy is conceived as an objective process, and as they are not considered to interact within the total historic existence and the human objects which express it. Hence, J. Domarchi is entirely correct in giving Marx credit for this phenomenology of the cultural world[21] which Hegel had broached in his analysis of the 18th century as the century of money; and similar analyses remain to be offered for every civilization and for every period. But, objects Naville, for Marx "the manifestation, the phenomenological aspect of reality and especially of 'ideal reality' is precisely what must be explained."[22] This is only appearance, and reality is economic. As if a phenomenology could not distinguish between "creating" and "created" phenomena. And as if the relation of ideology to economy in Marxism is that of appearance to reality. The bourgeois ideologies which contaminate all of bourgeois society including its proletariat, are not *appearances*: they mystify bourgeois society and present themselves to it as a consistent world. They are exactly as "real" as the structures of capitalistic economy with which they form a unitary system. These ideologies and this economy together are appearances from the point of view of socialist life and economy which can already be previewed in them, but until these are realized the forms of bourgeois life and production maintain their weight, reality, and effectiveness. Lenin knew this well when he said that the class struggle will last for years after the revolution. Marxist "materialism" would not be rigorously defined and defended against the offensive parries of mechanism if Marx had not developed his theory of the praxis or of social existence as the concrete medium of history, at equal distance from idealism and metaphysical materialism.

That being so, what can be the situation of philosophy in the Marxist perspective? It is an ideology, in other words, an abstract aspect of the total historical life and, in so far as it wants to become "autonomous," it is once more a 'fantastic realization of man" which plays its role in the mystification of the bourgeois world. But "the more the domain that we are examining will depart from economy and approach pure and abstract ideology, the more we will find that it presents accidental elements in its evolution, the more jagged will be its curve."[23] Any attempt to explain a philosophy as a whole by economic conditions is therefore insufficient; one must look at the content and discuss fundamentals. "It is not true that the economic situation is the only cause and alone active, and that all other phenomena are only a passive effect."[24] Causal thought here, as elsewhere, is insufficient. "The ordinary conception of cause and effect as strictly opposed poles" is abstract.[25] A philosophy, as an art or poetry, is of one period, but nothing prevents it from grasping through this particular period truths which are definitive, as Greek art found the secret of "eternal charm." (Marx) The economy of a period produces an ideology because it is lived by men who seek to realize themselves in it; in one sense this economy limits their views, but, in another, it is their area of contact with being, their experience; and it can happen to them as it happened to Marx himself not to be merely subjected to it but to understand it, and thereby virtually to overcome it. The philosophy would only be false so long as it remains abstract and would shut itself into concepts and reasonable beings, and would mask the actual interhuman relations. *Even then,* despite masking them, it expresses them, and Marxism will not turn away from it but will decipher and translate and *realize* it. "It is . . . with justification that in Germany the practical political party demands the negation of philosophy. Its error consists . . . in stopping at this demand which it does not and cannot seriously realize. It imagines effecting this negation by turning its back to philosophy and by giving it, softly and with averted glance, a few banal and ill-humoured phrases. . . . In a word: you cannot abolish philosophy except by giving it realization."[26] The Cogito is false only in so far as it separates and destroys our inherence in the world. One will abolish it only by realizing it, that is, by showing that it is eminently inherent in interhuman relations. Hegel is not false, he is true from one end to the other, but abstract. One must only give the historical names to the mythological struggles which he describes between the conscience-in-itself and the conscience-for-itself. Hegelian logic is, as has been said, "the algebra of the revolution." The "fetichism of merchandise" is the historic realization of this alienation which Hegel describes as an enigma, and *Capital* is, as has been said, a concrete *Phenomenology of the Mind.* Hegel and the philosopher of recent years can be reproached for imagining that, by thought, he alone can obtain the truths of all the other existences, integrate them, surpass them and gather from the depth of their wisdom the revelation of the meaning of history, which other men merely undergo. To philosophize is one way of existing among others, and one can not flatter oneself to exhaust, as Marx says, in "a purely philosophical existence" the religious existence," the "political existence," the "juridical existence," the "artistic existence," nor, in general, "the true human existence."[27] But if the philosopher knows this, if he sets himself the task of following the other experiences and the other existences in their imminent logic instead of putting himself in their place, if he abandons the illusion of contemplating the totality of fulfilled history and feels himself, like other men, caught in it, and before a future *to build,* then the philosophy realizes itself and vanishes as separate philosophy.

(Translated by Eva and Harold Orlansky)

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. **"European"** is an editor, journalist and scholar now living in France who contributes regularly to "Politics". His most recent article was "Violence and Sociability", in our January issue . . . **Simone de Beauvoir,** a leading existentialist, is a collaborator of Sartre on "Les Temps Modernes", in which her essay originally appeared. She recently returned to France after an extensive lecture tour in this country . . . **Albert Camus,** whose novel, "The Stranger", appeared here last year, is an editor of the daily newspaper, "Combat", which he helped put out during the occupation. His article was published serially there last fall . . . **Georges Bataille** is the editor of the recently founded monthly, "Critique", in which his article appeared. He is the author of "Nietzsche", "L'Experience Interieure" and other books . . . **Albert Palle's** article appeared in "Les Temps Modernes." He is a regular contributor to "Combat" and other journals . . . **Jean-Paul Sartre,** whose novel, "The Age of Reason", has just been published over here, is the leader of the existentialist movement and the editor of "Les Temps Modernes", in which his article originally appeared. Like some of the other articles in this issue, it has has had to be cut for space reasons. Omissions are indicated by dots . . . **David Rousset's** article is part of a book of the same name recently published in Paris. His "The Other Kingdom", also about concentration-camp life, has just been published by Reynal and Hitchcock . . . **Maurice Merleau-Ponty's** article originally appeared in the Marxist monthly, "La Revue Internationale." He is the author of "La Phenomenologie de la Perception."

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